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Abstract

This project analyzes the rhetoric of the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York as it expresses the historical context and effects of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention. With an eye towards feminist possibilities, the project traces the politics of emphasis and erasure by accounting for material, spatial and visual strategies in the Visitor Center and historic buildings. I argue that the park influences and reflects public memory of the early American women's rights movement that has rhetorical implications for modern iterations of the movements that follow.

Alongside archival research, I critically analyze the experience of the visitor, as indeed I position myself in my onsite research, through the park spaces, tours and exhibits. Beginning in the Visitor Center, the visual politics nominate a "universal sisterhood" and present a unified women's story which glosses over vitally important fissures in social movements' histories. In the Chapel and Stanton House tours, I argue that park ranger practices demonstrate an anxiety for what many in Tourism Studies call "objective authenticity." Here, material takes on particular, expert meaning which does not leave space for the tensions of public memories to come out. In the last chapter of analysis, I argue the anxiety over a contested image in the Visitor Center (the "Black Lesbian Feminist") reveals the controversy concerning the "appropriate" narrative the park *ought* to be telling about the movement. I use Roger Aden's reading of narratives and counternarratives concerning the NPS Independence Park in Philadelphia to analyze the clash of narratives in Seneca Falls. Using Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang's analysis of iconoclasm in public sphere theory, I analyze the clash as it is symbolized by and superimposed through the anxiety over the specific image of the Black Lesbian Feminist.

SIGHTS AND SPACES OF MOVING MEMORIES:
THE PUBLIC MEMORY WORK OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK

By

Alia Bellwood

B.A., St. John's University, 2010

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of
Arts in Communication and Rhetorical Studies

Syracuse University
December 2014

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Ultimately, I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Elizabeth “Betty” Myers who, along with Grandma Shirley True, always listened to my ideas and encouraged my endeavors. Aunt Betty did not live to see the project’s completion but she and Grandma are woven into its fabric. She would have loved the park.

Thank you, Alana Bellwood, Dr. Morteza Haeri, and Reza Khatami for letting me rest with you when I was tired and talk through the difficulties. And, to my fellow graduate student cohort of 2012-2014, you are all my home. I am indebted to Professor Stephen Llano for asking me what I thought about inequality and for every question that followed. For the genesis of this project and her unbounded optimism, I will always thank Professor Anne Demo. Professor Charles E. Morris III, I am eternally grateful for your ongoing insight, patience and example. Finally, this project would not have been possible without the support of the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies at Syracuse University. And it would have been a shadow of what it is without the beautiful cooperation of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park’s rangers and historians, expressly Chief of Cultural Resources Vivien Rose, Park Historian Anne M. Derousie, and Rangers John Stoudt and Patrick Stenshorn.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Each year, especially around the month of July, thousands of tourists travel through Central New York to a small hamlet called Seneca Falls. The hamlet is home to an important set of symbols of American history and the women's rights movement mythically forged in the summer of 1848.

The events that conspired from this ground powerfully smolder in American memory.

Throughout downtown, purple street flags and various metal plaques direct visitors to the restored Wesleyan Methodist Chapel building, the crown jewel of the National Park Service's Women's Rights National Historical Park (henceforth WRNHP), where the first Women's Rights Convention was held. A web of National Park Service (henceforth NPS) structures constituting the park (three homes, the chapel site, a green space/ampitheater and a visitor center), municipal sites like the Frank J. Ludovico Sculpture Trail, and community organizations including the National Women's Hall of Fame, reflect how women's rights history dominate the hamlet's landscape and narrative.

And it is no surprise. Historians and activists alike point to the central importance of the Chapel for its role in hosting the convention which produced and passed, with 100 signatures, the historically significant Declaration of Sentiments. The drafters' and organizers' name, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, Jane Hunt and Mary Ann M'Clintock heroically echo from exhibit spaces, public art installations, to traffic signs. The WRNHP website boasts that "the First Women's Rights Convention and the Declaration of Sentiments have earned the Village of Seneca Falls a large place in the hearts of people all over the world" and that "there is no major part of our lives today which has not been affected by this revolutionary document."¹

¹ "Stories - Women's Rights National Historical Park," *National Park Service*, October 25, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/stories.htm>.

The park continues to be an influential element of the NPS's network and a strong symbol of American citizenship. The location's popularity hit a recent peak in 2012 with more than 30,000 annual visitors.² It continues to enjoy prominence on the political scene with various forms of promotional and legislative support from Hillary Rodham Clinton while First Lady, New York Senator, and Secretary of State.³ In honor of the 2013 Women's Equality Day, President Barack Obama toured the park Visitor Center and presented the superintendent and rangers with a signed copy of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, his first law as president which reinforces equal compensation for women in the workforce. His signature included a note reading, "It's an honor to visit Seneca Falls and recall the righteous struggle that found expression here. I'm also proud to add an example of Lilly Ledbetter's leadership to your collection. Thanks for all you do to honor the character and perseverance of America's women."⁴

This thesis takes the WRNHP as a rhetorical text. The park includes several historical buildings throughout Seneca Falls and into Waterloo, New York. The buildings house exhibits and host tours specific to the park's purpose as explained (albeit vaguely) by the US Department of Interior's National Park Service. The park's website issued a reminder in the summer of 2013 that the Women's Rights National Historical Park serves an important albeit less publicized role:

While the National Park Service is best known for its stewardship of the large national parks, like Yosemite and Grand Canyon, we have also been tasked by Congress to care for places important to our nation's history. From the Japanese American internment

² "Annual Park Recreation Visitation Women's Rights NHP," *National Park Service*, 2012, <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats>.

³ Hillary Rodham Clinton was the keynote speaker at the park's 150th anniversary of the convention in 1998. She supported the National Women's Rights History Project Act with Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, first passed in 2009 and was proposed for reauthorization in July 2013. Additionally, during her tenure as Secretary of State, Clinton sent a congratulatory letter to the park superintendent upon the completion of the Wesleyan Chapel's restoration. The act establishes the Votes for Women Trail automobile route in New York, will increase the national registry holdings of historic sites significant to women's history and encourages partnerships between public and private organizations to better provide education programs concerning women's rights history.

⁴ Philip Rucker, "Obama Visits Seneca Falls Historic Site, Presents Copy of Ledbetter Fair Pay Act," *Washington Post*, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2013/08/22/obama-visits-seneca-falls-historic-site-presents-copy-of-ledbetter-fair-pay-act/>.

camp at Manzanar, to the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, to the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, to Women's Rights in Seneca Falls, New York, our job is to preserve these places and tell their stories so that we never forget that the freedoms we enjoy as Americans come at a high cost.⁵

I am interested in how the park materially and symbolically recounts the memory of the Women's Rights movement as birthed from the Women's Rights Convention in this historically specific space. I explore public memory as it is expressed, contested and contestable materially to better understand how the women's rights movement is enunciated by the park's exhibits, tours and space. Put differently, the project explores *who* is ex/included in this park's narrative, *to what degree* and *how*? I critically analyze the experience of the visitor, as indeed I position myself in my onsite research, through the park spaces, tours and exhibits.

Text Justification

While today's visitors are 165 years removed from the event which gave the park's artifacts their poignant significance, this project explores the park's considerable cultural, political and rhetorical substance. That the site serves as a resource for historical knowledge about American and women's history is undeniable. The strategies embedded in the park's design and rhetoric are important elements of national narratives. In this thesis, I analyze the intersection of social movements, public memory work, and material rhetoric as these components operate through the WRNHP sites, an as of yet understudied site. No external analysis has been published. The rhetorical dimensions present particular histories which have certain embedded politics. By reading the politics of emphasis and erasure, I evaluate the feminist and pedagogical implications of these sites as some are individually experienced and as they may exist in concert with the political landscapes. My research and analysis shows how powerful the park is for its influence on feminist politics and in introducing these politics to visitors who, presumably, come to the

⁵ *Islamic School*, Multimedia Presentations (Schenectady, New York, 2013), <http://www.nps.gov/wori/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm>.

park to learn about what was, is now and could be in the future. To do this responsibly, it is important to better understand the context of the park itself. First, I describe the historical context of the convention, especially, as the park understands it. Second, I will outline the establishment of the park and its rhetorical significance to the public memory of the movement.

The park itself boasts an impressive and widely referenced origin story of the women's rights movement. Researchers and prospective visitors alike can reference the pages of historical context on the NPS website which privilege the site's role in formulating and propelling a women's rights movement in the US. The WRNHP constitutes the Seneca Falls convention as the "first" Women's Rights Convention which, the site claims, marks the "formal beginning" of the movement.⁶ NPS explains that the convention drew in the "optimistic" people of the area who "were willing to listen to and participate in a discussion about changing the public roles of women in society."⁷ In fact, the park website explains that the 1848 citizenry were primed for gender reform by religious revivals, a healthy temperance movement and active abolitionist groups. As the story is told, the convention helped birth a new, focused force with the momentum of movements already well underway.

However, the convention is by no means the first time women's issues entered into the public sphere. And this is not a claim that the park makes. Historians explain that prior to the famous 1848 Women's Rights Convention, American activists had already begun to lecture and publish on the dimensions and detriments of inequality between the sexes. According to Eric Foner, by the 1830s, American white women had already begun to make an impression on public discourse usually from within abolitionist circles; he claims there was an undeniable "public

⁶ "Stories."

⁷ "Seneca Falls in 1848 - Women's Rights National Historical Park" (National Park Service, October 25, 2013), <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/seneca-falls-in-1848.htm>.

presence.”⁸ For example, Americans Angelina Grimké and Sarah Grimké took up their pen and challenged social norms through polished and thoughtful public orations and open letters.⁹ Many historians have offered explanations as to why American women began a more widespread push for equality in the 1830s.

Such presence emerged from changing relations of the public and private spheres. Amidst arguments that point out the industrial revolution or belated influence of libertarianism as causes, historian William L. O’Neill argues that the movement was a “reaction to the great pressures that accompanied the emergence of the nuclear family.”¹⁰ The “cult of womanhood” is a factor the park’s Visitor Center explains with great detail. Historian Anne M. Boylan explains that post-revolution American gender norms were guided by notions of “republican mother” which were transformed by the 1830s into ideals of “true womanhood.”¹¹ The economic revolution of the 19th century posed a challenge to gender roles and the considerable evangelical influence connected “personal liberty with religious principles, and self-discipline with public virtue” thus making social justice advocacy an important element of personal development and “womanly public action.”¹² If woman were truly man’s “moral superior” then surely her god-given talents were best used improving man’s plight. As a result the number of woman organizations grew substantially between 1800 and the 1840s at which point New York City boasted four dozen organizations and Boston two dozen.¹³ Historian Ellen Carol DuBois also attributes the emergence of the women’s movement with the influence of previous and ongoing reform politics

⁸ Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 72.

⁹ Stephen H. Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination*, Rhetoric and Public Affairs Series (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999); William L. O’Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1971), 11–12.

¹⁰ O’Neill, *Everyone Was Brave*, 3–5.

¹¹ Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women’s Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8, 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

and additionally a mounting recognition of a common set of circumstances among white women.¹⁴ She summarizes the concerns of those who formed the movement as including “the limited domestic sphere prescribed for them, their increasing isolation from the major economic and political developments of their society, and above all their mounting discontent with their situation.”¹⁵

We are told that the growing discontent was expressly felt by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who met in 1840 at the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London.¹⁶ Only male delegates were permitted seating and involvement in the convention. Angered by their exclusion from the convention, the two women met again in 1848 (while Mott was visiting her sister, Martha Wright.)¹⁷ This time they were in Seneca Falls, New York and immediately began plans for a convention specifically to address sexism. The three day convention was staged in less than a week and hosted in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in the center of Seneca Falls—a central location due to its proximity to the Erie Canal and the Quaker and abolitionist communities throughout upstate New York. NPS brochure and exhibit materials explain that in the home of Thomas and Mary Anne M’Clintock, the ladies drafted the Declaration of Sentiments and its accompanying resolutions debated at the 3-day convention. The formidable document was eventually ratified by 100 votes.

Together the ladies agreed to co-opt the Declaration of Independence form in order to declare the radical notion that “all men *and women* are created equal.”¹⁸ However, more than

¹⁴ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 22.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

¹⁷ “Elizabeth Cady Stanton - Women’s Rights National Historical Park (U.S. National Park Service),” *National Park Service*, October 25, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/elizabeth-cady-stanton.htm>.

¹⁸ Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), 74–75. Emphasis mine.

simply making female citizens explicitly visible, the Seneca Falls convention ratified a document that pronounced the stark discrimination women face at the hands of male dominated society in the realms of governance, marriage, religion, education, the economy and her own mind. They proclaimed to the world that “the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having its direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her.”¹⁹ Just as the Founding Fathers asserted their rights as creations of God, so did the Founding Mothers in Seneca Falls. While Declaration of Independence drafters listed grievances of a tyrannical crown against its own subjects, Declaration of Sentiments drafters articulated male perpetrated tyranny that left them “aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights.”²⁰ The feminine framers highlight social double standards and man’s continued attempt “to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.”²¹ They explain that all such damages are possible primarily because she is disenfranchised. She “had no voice” in laws and thus in marriage was rendered “civilly dead,” while, if single, her sole recognition from the government is as a property owner taxed without representation. It was a powerful document, indeed, which itself recognized its revolutionary role:

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.²²

¹⁹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., “Declaration of Sentiments - Women’s Rights National Historical Park (U.S. National Park Service),” *National Park Service*, accessed November 9, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

The 32 male signatories, signing beneath the names of the 68 women who voted for ratification, listed their names beneath the script “The following are the names of the gentlemen present in favor of the movement.”²³ It can certainly be said that not only did the drafters anticipate the hostility that followed Frederick Douglass’ publication of the Declaration of Sentiments, but also that the framers saw perhaps a glimpse of the new force emerging from the ad hoc and hastily organized convention.

James Mott, Lucretia Mott’s husband, performed the procedural speaking role of the convention due to how radical the concept of a female public orator was. The roughly 300 in attendance included prominent names such as Frederick Douglass.²⁴ During the debates, his voice was a persuasive force in including women’s enfranchisement in the final Declaration. While Douglass played an important role in the convention’s debates and in disseminating the Declaration of Sentiments for a wide readership through his abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*, this convention did not include all voices.²⁵ There is no evidence that women of color were present or had any say in the drafting and debate processes.

Still, historians and the media highlight the convention for its effects on the visible social movement that *seemingly* coalesced in its wake. The convention is believed to have given the movement a recognizable form on the American political stage. Historian Eleanor Flexner argues that “a sharp impetus—leadership and, above all, a program” is precisely what the convention provided and what was necessary to structure grievances into a movement.²⁶ DuBois adds that Stanton and Douglass’ insistence that the right to enfranchisement be ratified by the convention

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ It is unknown how many originally signed the declaration because numerous signatures were rescinded post-convention. Once the dust settled, it was an even 100.

²⁵ John Stoudt, “Ranger Led Tour of Wesleyan Chapel” (presented at the Park Tour, Women’s Rights National Historical Park, August 22, 2013).

²⁶ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 71.

helped to organize women's rights issues around this now "cornerstone" issue as "the one cardinal demand."²⁷ It would seem such formidable influence and organizational force propelled the event to star status in public memory. A movement was "born." It is not uncommon to hear activists such as Mott and Stanton referred to as the "mothers" of the movement. From US postage stamps to public and private living memorials, the convention organizers continue to serve as important national symbols. For example, in 1948 the US postal office issued a 3¢ postage stamp depicting Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt and Lucretia Mott with a banner that read "100 Years of Progress of Women." These were the female citizens the government felt it most appropriate to put a face to the struggle and, if you will note, the Seneca Falls convention acts as ground zero for the movement's beginning yet again. Still for many, the origin of the movement serves as a litmus test for activists, politicians and history books to measure just how far the women's rights has progressed since.

However, historian Lisa Tetrault's 2014 volume, *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, illustrates how deeply contentious the battle over the movement's history was. The Seneca Falls story now has a "veneer of truth" as "the most enduring and long-standing myth ever produced by a U.S. social movement."²⁸ It was only in the years after the Civil War when the movement, splintered along lines of inclusion, method and philosophy into the National Women Suffrage Association (and Union Woman Suffrage Association) led by Stanton and Anthony and the American Woman Suffrage Association led by figures such as Mott and William Lloyd Garrison, went in search of its history. Groups wrestled for control over the movement by offering their own self-interested origin stories which, naturally, suggested a favorable leader and heir to the movement. Ironically, Stanton chaired the 1870 "Twentieth Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Woman

²⁷ DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 41.

²⁸ Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*, 2014, 2, 4.

Suffrage Movement” which celebrated the 1850 Worcester, MA Convention with little to no importance granted the 1848 Seneca Falls meeting.²⁹ However, in 1973, Stanton and Anthony asserted the 1848 convention’s primacy in response to the increasingly complicated and divisive political landscape. Tetrault explains, “The myth of Seneca Falls—in the sense of a venerated story, or collective memory, that gave the movement a particular origin, a particular doctrine, and a particular meaning—first began to cohere here, twenty-five years after the event itself.”³⁰ Stanton and Anthony’s memory work helped produce the “cornerstone” of enfranchisement and focus on national strategy while forwarding Stanton’s leadership as indispensable and expert.

The WRNHP tells an important origin story for the nation. Yet the park’s placement is in an otherwise obscure town so far north that it is closer to the Canadian border than to New York’s capital, Albany. While there may be several productive ways of understanding the museum’s remote location, I argue that what Pierre Nora calls the “trace,” the material sign which *authenticates* history is a significant focus of the park.³¹ For many historians inside and outside of Women’s Studies programs, the Chapel and the convention it housed root the park in Seneca Falls and provides a useful public memory heuristic as a significant origin story. Roger Aden’s analysis of the memory work of the NPS Independence Hall park demonstrates the deep investment in origin stories as “to change an emplaced foundation narrative is to change the ideological foundations of the nation.”³² The museum plays an important role in molding and guarding these treasured histories and the NPS is an especially key player. Former

²⁹ Ibid., 37–45.

³⁰ Ibid., 46.

³¹ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1, 1989): 7–24.

³² Roger C. Aden, “Redefining the ‘Cradle of Liberty’: The President’s House Controversy in Independence National Historical Park,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 255.

Superintendent Linda Canzanelli recognizes that the park's interpretive work from the onset was pushing NPS norms.³³

The National Park Service and Public Memory

It is important to analyze the role of the NPS to better understand the context of its acquisition of the historic sites and establishment of the WRNHP. The NPS, a part of the US Department of Interior, is charged with preserving significant sites and thus interpreting the memories associated with them.³⁴ John Bodnar explains that since the first big expansion of the NPS site holdings in the 1920s there have been clashes over what kind of memory was valuable enough to warrant federal underwriting. When the NPS expanded its reach from natural preservation to the custodial responsibility over cultural and historical sites, it “inherited” an intensely nationalistic, progressive narrative.³⁵ Sites fit into a narrative of nation building that privileged specific forms of citizenry and heroism. Memories unfitting to a unified nationalism were edited or shunned. The NPS worked to expand its reach on historical and national relevance in 1972 with a larger number of themes under which proposed sites could fall. However, the expansion failed to alter the strict national schematics. Additionally, the 1950s phenomenon of leisure time and travel required the NPS to invest its patriotic and unifying programming towards inspirational interpretation. Specifically, the sites’ “therapeutic function” was being recognized and resulted in an increased education focus of the NPS in urban areas.³⁶ This was strengthened, Bodnar argues, in the 1970s when the interpretation of national parks began to shape the sites as “places of

³³ Rebecca Conard and Elizabeth Smith, “Linda Canzanelli,” September 28, 2008, Women’s Rights National Historical Park; 12, Linda Canzanelli, National Park Service; Women’s Rights National Historical Park.

³⁴ “Organic Act of 1916 - Great Basin National Park,” *National Park Service*, accessed October 29, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/grba/parkmgmt/organic-act-of-1916.htm>.

³⁵ John E Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 204.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 194–205.

renewal from the tedium of modern life.”³⁷ Park sites, then, are deployed as important resources for the mental and civic wellbeing of citizens, and nationalism’s interpellation.

Given the historically symbolic importance of the Women’s Rights Convention, it may be surprising that the WRNHP is a newer part of the NPS system. The park was established by Congress in 1980, less than 35 years ago, and opened to the public a mere 20 years ago in 1993.³⁸ The park is young however not because of a recent historical uncovering or epiphany of the convention’s role. This was already documented by historians of the movement, not least of all Anthony, Stanton and Matilda Gage.³⁹ Flexner, for example, authored her influential historical account of the women’s rights movement’s origins in 1959—well before the park was established. The park was authorized and opened amidst a push by activists to increase visibility of women’s history in the national narrative especially as it was expressed by the NPS.

Feminists advocated to augment women’s history visibility through the preservation of historic sites and the creation of memorials. Prior to the 1980s, the nation had no historic preservation project dedicated to telling the holistic story of American women nor did it have any real investment in preserving and interpreting the sites in Seneca Falls and Waterloo. In 1932, New York State installed a way sign that signaled the significance of the Chapel but the NPS did not actually secure the building for preservation until 1985.⁴⁰ The crisis of underrepresentation was so extreme that in 1992 Page Putnam Miller, director of the Women’s History Landmark Project (henceforth WHLP), argued that “if Americans had to rely on existing historic sites for their understanding of women’s history a very limited and distorted picture

³⁷ Ibid., 201.

³⁸ Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998). This highly recommended source traces women’s roles in the NPS and in the history of US preservation.

³⁹ The first volume of *History of Woman Suffrage* spans 1848 to 1861.

⁴⁰ “Wesleyan Chapel Rehabilitation Project - Women’s Rights National Historical Park,” *National Park Service*, October 25, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/wesleyan-chapel-rehabilitation-project.htm>.

would emerge.”⁴¹ Polly Welts Kaufman, a National Parks historian, points out that the 5 year WHLP (1989-1994) was responding to the meager representation of women in the nation’s memorials and parks. Prior to the project, the National Historic Landmark listed two thousand sites of which only 2.5 percent concentrated on women.⁴² As a result of NPS and other organizations’ collaboration, the number of women focused landmarks nearly doubled.

Even in the park’s earliest beginnings it was credited with doing considerable rhetorical work that continues today. Kaufman describes a telling joke made amid the early founding of the WRNHP: “When Senator Paul Tsongas opened the hearing for Women’s Rights NHP in 1980, he wryly stated that it would be the ‘complement to the Men’s Rights National Historic Park.’ When asked where the location for that park was, Tsongas is quoted in September 1980 to have answered, ‘Probably right here in Washington.’”⁴³ The joke highlights the Senator’s good humor though more importantly the symbolic importance of the WRNHP in a sea of male political and memorial dominance. Since its founding, the park draws generous descriptions of gratitude and pride from visitors.⁴⁴ While President Carter’s authorization of the park in 1980 and the purchase of the Chapel in 1985 precede the WHLP, it is significant to note that the park opened to the public while the project was in full swing. Major budgetary decisions were made which significantly impacted the park’s ability to restore the Chapel and Stanton House and acquire other grounds.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Page Putnam Miller, *Landmarks of American Women’s History*, American Landmarks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

⁴² Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice: A History*, 230.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁴⁴ “Women’s Rights National Historical Park Comprehensive Interpretive Plan” (National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2002), 51–54, <http://www.nps.gov/wori/parkmgmt/upload/WORICIPFINAL.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Rebecca Conard, “‘All Men and Women Are Created Equal’: An Administrative History of Women’s Rights National Historical Park” (National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, April 2012), 149–166.

While much has been written about the historical significance of the lives lived in and affected by Seneca Falls and Waterloo⁴⁶ there is little research that begins to explain how the park memorializes the movement. The great American memorial sites “create and celebrate” what Erica Doss calls “an imaginary national citizen.” She further argues that it is through these sites that one learns idealized civic duty; what it means to be the “‘good’ citizen that all American citizens aspire to become.”⁴⁷ While the WRNHP is not a memorial per se, it does, even today, stand as one of the most prominent representations of American women’s civic contribution. Doss explains that “women are [still] woefully underrepresented in American memorial culture; none of the forty-four national memorials managed by or affiliated with the NPS, for example, specifically focus on women, and fewer than four percent of the seventy thousand sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places are associated with women.”⁴⁸ Though representation is better than the 1980s and 1990s, there is still much to be done.

Two major elements highlight the park’s rhetorical significance for public memory. On the one hand, the park has a monopoly on the women’s rights movement origin story by controlling access and much of the interpretive experience of many artifacts and memory places associated with the event. On the other and in spite of efforts to diversify the NPS’s holdings, the park enjoys primacy due to its *nearly* solitary status as a federally endorsed women’s rights history site. It is significant that the movement is memorialized at this site as the WRNHP communicates the cultural significance of the movement to society today. The park homepage explains that “the story of the first Women’s Rights Convention... is a story of struggles for civil

⁴⁶ Lori D. Ginzberg, “Re-Viewing the First Wave,” *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (July 1, 2002): 419–34; Nancy Isenberg, “Founding Mothers, Myths, and a Martyr,” *Journal of Women’s History* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 185–94. Ginzberg explores six historians’ recent books concerning women associated with the First Wave in ways that challenge and nuance previous scholarship. Isenberg points out that often new scholarship is frustratingly unrigorous and apt to make myths rather than real people visible.

⁴⁷ Erika Lee Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 56.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

rights, human rights, and equality, global struggles that continue today. The efforts of women's rights leaders, abolitionists, and other 19th century reformers remind us that all people must be accepted as equals."⁴⁹ The progressive narrative of the NPS is tempered by the park's proclaimed involvement in modern social injustices, although this is an element of the park's narrative that is contested as seen in the last chapter.

Text Dimensions

The WRNHP's material and symbolic components are intimately intertwined. Careful reading of the material presentation and context of artifacts can provide a better appreciation of the way these residual remnants of historical memory operate in discourse in the surrounding material context. In the acknowledgements of *Rhetoric, Materiality, & Politics*, Barbara Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites' point out that the relationship between rhetoric and materiality is incomplete without the concept of "politics." They explain that post-1960s rhetoric scholars became increasingly concerned with "the tension between idealism and materialism, and its implications for the relationship between theory and praxis" and, as a result, the field "labored to find a place between the *discovery* of truth and knowledge and the *interpretation* and *performance* of meaning and value."⁵⁰ The volume, then, exemplifies how rhetoric's materiality, how material can mean rhetorically, influences where power is, who has it and what it can do.

A major force in the "turn to a rhetorical materialism" is Michael Calvin McGee's landmark essay. He seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by justifying a critical approach that "appreciat[es] rhetoric as a mode of consciousness operating within an economy of phenomenological experience."⁵¹ He calls for a shift of perspective from idealizing and

⁴⁹ "Women's Rights National Historical Park," *National Park Service*, October 27, 2013, <http://www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm>.

⁵⁰ Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites, eds., "Introduction," in *Rhetoric, Materiality, & Politics*, *Frontiers in Political Communication*, v. 13 (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

aestheticizing speech to how that speech “*mediates* the relations of human beings that together constitute it.”⁵² Material, in this sense, is not the rock but the sociopolitical system in which the rock is both constituted by and has effects on. The power’s movement is material. McGee argues that scholars ought to transition critical emphasis from the techniques and forms of rhetoric to the lived experience of the rhetor, the speech and the effects upon the web of relations in which the rhetor and audience are embedded. McGee challenges non-material approaches to rhetorical criticism by arguing that “a study of rhetoric... is predominantly a study of practice” and that “discourse is part of a material phenomenon.”⁵³

Critic’s study of the experience is impoverished when not analyzed within the material context in which it occurred. Carole Blair points out that quotidian language is steeped in materially rooted terms. Her examples of verbs such as “grounds,” “grasp,” and “buttress” highlight the connection we implicitly make between language and its role in the material realm.⁵⁴ Her work, and this essay is no exception, takes the rhetoric of material seriously—material that “do[es] not fall into silence.”⁵⁵ She argues for a broader understanding of “rhetoric” and a liberal definition of “text” to analyze the rhetoric of materiality and thus shed light on rhetoric’s materiality. Blair echoes McGee’s stance when she explains that liberal humanism “perpetuated a view of rhetorical practice as a (symbolic, meaning-ful) instrument under the control of the rhetor” and resulted in an “overemphasis on rhetorical production and an exceptionally narrow understanding of effect.”⁵⁶ Rhetorical scholars need new approaches to overcome the deficit of tools liberal humanism offers. Blair posits that “If rhetoric’s materiality

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Michael Calvin McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” in *Rhetoric, Materiality, & Politics*, ed. Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites, *Frontiers in Political Communication*, v. 13 (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 32.

⁵⁴ Carole Blair, “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality,” in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 16.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 21.

is not a function of its symbolic constructions of meaning, then we must look elsewhere: we must ask not just what a text means but, more generally, what it does; and we must not understand what it does as adhering strictly to what it was supposed to do.”⁵⁷ I take this approach to the relationship between rhetoric and materiality as an important justification for the dimensions of x, which span exhibits, institutional documents, media coverage, and practices within spaces, and the methodology I engage in. The analysis centers on the material expressions and contestations of public memory.

The WRNHP includes sites spread throughout Seneca Falls and Waterloo, NY. The park was authorized in 1980 however the ever-important Chapel site was not acquired until 1985.⁵⁸ The park’s Visitor Center, newly restored Chapel, and amphitheater-style Declaration Park form the “Wesleyan Chapel Block” at the center of downtown.⁵⁹ In 1993, the block of structures first opened to the public and park brochures, websites and travel tips advise that visitors begin their experience of the park at the Visitor Center. This makes the material practices in this standalone building the frontline in interpretive guidance especially for those unfamiliar with the site and its historical significance and cultural currency, including children. Additionally, numerous visitors visit only the Visitor Center because the historical homes are seasonal and the Chapel tours are only offered twice a day. Part of my analysis is drawn from the site as it maps for visitors the social, political and geographical landscape.

The growth and development of sites continues today as the NPS obtains more material space of significance to the convention and further transforms current holdings. The Chapel and Elizabeth Cady Stanton home are relatively older holdings of the park but have recently undergone drastic restoration. Today, visitors can also seasonally visit Mary Ann M’Clintock

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ “Wesleyan Chapel Rehabilitation Project - Women’s Rights National Historical Park.”

⁵⁹ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice: A History*, 221.

and Jane Hunt's respective homes in Waterloo, NY due to their hand in the organizing efforts. In *Places of Public Memory*, Blair, Dickinson and Ott explain the importance of attending to the history of memory sites as memory sites. Critics "must attend... to the intervening uses, deployments, circulations and rearticulations in the time between the establishment of a place and our current practices in and of that place."⁶⁰ The transformation of sites through time provides a legible trajectory for rhetorical scholars to analyze public memory trends. Regardless of intention, but precisely because the park visitor's involvement in public memory production relies heavily on the material experience; a morphing space morphs public memory.

While I intend on centering my analysis on the official park sites, it is important to bear in mind that the hamlet and village of Seneca Falls and Waterloo are materially and economically invested in the history of women's rights. The park focused heavily on collaborating with local constituents, especially when first founding the park with the first Superintendent Judy Hart and later with Superintendant Joanne Hanley, whose efforts to more closely "re-align" the park's message with local vision is the subject of the last chapter.⁶¹ A culture of historical education promotes the importance of the event and influences the way the park is read by visitors and community members. There are several other formal and informal sites that work to interpret either the history of the area or women's accomplishments post-convention. To ignore this local context is to artificially cut out the park and its narrative from the ecosystem in which it thrives and is experienced.⁶² My reading of the WRNHP text

⁶⁰ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, "Introduction," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 31.

⁶¹ Conard, "'All Men and Women Are Created Equal': An Administrative History of Women's Rights National Historical Park."

⁶² Bernard J. Armada, "Memorial Agon: An Interpretive Tour of the National Civil Rights Museum," *The Southern Communication Journal* 63, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 235–43. Bernard Armada exemplifies this careful attention to local context in his rhetorical read of the National Civil Rights Museum and the ongoing one woman protest outside the museum as the two are incomplete, partial narratives on their own. His reading is richer for that larger scope.

necessarily assumes that its historical and modern localities are essential contexts for a useful reading of its memory work. As a result, I foreground site visits to engage with the material of the museum as much like a visitor as possible. I engage with exhibit spaces and tours to interrogate the experience and its implications for public memory.

Literature Review

I enter the conversation about rhetoric, materiality and space, and public memory amid a great number of authors. The interdisciplinary realm of memory studies continues to expand. Some of the most formidable voices in the last several decades helped to propel the question of memory into the academic foray. Barbie Zelizer's classic essay, "Reading the Past Against the Grain," argues that by 1998 "contemporary memory studies [gave] the feel of a blended family grown too large too fast."⁶³ The statement could be even truer today as the productive friction between case studies and interdisciplinary theory burgeons the field still. In the next section, I gesture toward the work most critical to my project along three threads: a brief outline of public memory, the influence of space and materiality on memory, and museums and memorials.

Public Memory

Memory scholars consistently point back to the origins of memory studies in ancient Greek society. The Greek's primarily oral culture relied on the art of memory for public orations and to retain knowledge that otherwise would be unrecorded. In *Phaedrus*, Plato theorized the implications of memory and mis-memory, while, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* conceptualized the practice for public speaking. Communication scholars are apt to note that of Aristotle's parts of the canon of rhetoric, memory seemed the most underdeveloped for the centuries that followed.⁶⁴

⁶³ Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 2 (June 1995): 215.

⁶⁴ Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (February 1997): 1.

The study has flourished since. The most pertinent questions of public memory do not revolve around issues of accuracy but rather which stories are remembered, from whose perspective, towards what ends and through which strategies. When explaining the evolution in memory studies, David Glassberg stresses that the new approach excavates not one group and its historical memory but the “interrelationships between different versions of the past in the public arena.”⁶⁵ Scholars across the disciplines of sociology, history, art, and communication are compelled to explore the subject as a means to better understand publics then and now. For example, James Jasinski briefly outlines, in the *Sourcebook on Rhetoric* “Memory” entry, how public memory serves as a resource of “power and authority” in shaping social, political and cultural forces.⁶⁶ He explains that American abolitionists shaped narratives about early American history to cast compromise over abolition in an unfavorable light. The memories expressed by a culture tell critics something of the forces at work in that culture that index past instances (true, untrue, or more likely a shade of something else) for specific presentist needs. The old adage, “those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it,” speaks to the popularized notion that history carries weight especially as instructive tools for modern audiences about modern issues.

In an individual sense, one’s past is an important but unstable tool that roots identity and is used to mitigate anxiety. Some phenomenological studies of memory, especially Gaston Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, focus on individual experiences and memories. However, memory scholars today recognize the collective nature of memory and conceptualize it in terms of it

⁶⁵ David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 8.

⁶⁶ James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*, Rhetoric & Society (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 357.

being *public, collective, cultural, social* and *popular* memory.⁶⁷ The concepts of public memory and individual memory are intimately linked. For, David Lowenthal “memory pervades life” not simply on an individual scale but also collectively.⁶⁸ Each individual’s memory is collaborative in that it needs the memories of others for confirmation and endurance.⁶⁹ Thus, individual memories morph and are morphed by a larger body of memories: the collective. However, we may choose a kind of ignorance to that malleability, the constant editing and amendment processes are often “too painful to recognize.”⁷⁰ In terms of collective memory, the flux is unavoidable as Barbie Zelizer argues that “these transformations... constitute collective memory’s defining mark.”⁷¹ Memory, it seems, is a palimpsest read with less attention to the underlying layers of etchings than to the top-most markings—the most recent interpretations.

However the most recent interpretations will be written over in time as the needs to those recalling and in turn re-conjuring narratives transform. David Lowenthal explores the relationship between society’s unease and the degree of comfort Americans find in “looking back” which translates into a “rage to preserve.”⁷² Keeping memories alive requires an investment that locates our identity/ies in the past so as to serve as relatively firm resources to draw from. Our sense of the past is “partly a product of the present” and because of those presentist concerns is in constant flux.⁷³ The flux often re-locates memories in a progressive narrative deployed to situate past events as necessary precursors to the improvements gradually attained and highlighted at the moment. Thus our relationships to the past are in constant but not entirely unstable state. In this sense, Kendall Phillips explains that memory does fail as it cannot

⁶⁷ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, “Introduction,” 5–6.

⁶⁸ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 194.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁷¹ Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain,” 218.

⁷² Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, xv, xxiv.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 26.

provide “accuracy, stability, immutability” because it is comes into being at the intersection of that which is present and that which is not.⁷⁴ Thus, he claims, the number of variations from that point is probably uncountable. Still, Lowenthal acknowledges that “stability and change are alike essential” in the sense that an “inheritable” identity is preferred.⁷⁵

Origin stories are especially influential as where one historically and presently began has had considerable impact on what one is now and *should be* tomorrow. A history of magnitude is more desirable still as Pierre Nora argues that “the greater the origins, the more they magnified our greatness” because “through the past we venerated above all ourselves.”⁷⁶ Through a more specific methodology that focuses on European 19th and 20th century power relations, Foucault also argues that manipulation of past events has profound influence on the world. In light of how the Germans and French manipulated their historical relationship to the Roman Empire, Foucault quips that “we thought we were learning about history... we were learning about public right and constitutional law by looking at pictures from history.”⁷⁷ Histories of individuals, particular publics and nation states are each subject to this instability.

Today’s bitter public battles exemplify the political purposes origin stories are made to serve. The narratives concerning America’s Founding Fathers and great historical presidents’ lives and beliefs seem to be debated in every American election cycle.⁷⁸ Roger Aden describes the clash over the Independence National Historical Park’s account of President George Washington’s nine illegal slaves. Hot arguments about how to name or recognize them quickly

⁷⁴ Kendall R. Phillips, “The Failure of Memory: Reflections on Rhetoric and Public Remembrance,” *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 2 (April 3, 2010): 217.

⁷⁵ Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, 69.

⁷⁶ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 16.

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 126.

⁷⁸ As an example, in March 2014 at the Conservative Political Action Conference, Senator Rand Paul individually invoked James Madison, William Lloyd Garrison, John Adams, Daniel Webster and more generally, “the sons of liberty who fought against British soldiers.” *CPAC 2014 U.S. Senator Rand Paul*, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnMyOKTxQIk&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

became issues of what the change in narrative had to say about contemporary America.⁷⁹⁸⁰ At the time of the convention, what is now the busy Washington Mall, filled with monuments, wreaths and tourists, was but deforested and eroded grounds.⁸¹ Though the Washington Memorial was planned and built amid clashes regarding the benefit of marble representations on the Mall, Kirk Savage's research shows critics soon fell away as great admiration grew.⁸² Conflict over subsequent memorials, especially as the feel of the Mall became increasingly "martial" and had moments of "political correctness" battles, continued but often not in the favor of women and minorities.⁸³ Though farther along in the American timeline, Charles E. Morris III describes how control over the narratives of Abraham Lincoln—namely those pertaining to his sexuality—are carefully disciplined, often to the point of contradiction. When Larry Kramer publically claimed access to evidence of Lincoln's homosexual relationship and affection for Joshua Speed, historians and the public vehemently responded in the negative. Historians publically attested to a certainty of Lincoln's sexuality that even their own academic scholarship left in question.⁸⁴ Both cases are strong examples of the political and ideological forces and elements embedded in particular narratives. Inherent in the politics of public memory is strategic forgetting.

Memory is undoubtedly contested. Perspectives on what counts as an event and their accompanying judgments, in and of themselves unstable, can and *will* differ wildly. Nora explains that our inability to guess what will become important for future historians and memory and "since no one knows what the past will be made of next, anxiety turns everything into a

⁷⁹ Aden, "Redefining the 'Cradle of Liberty.'"

⁸⁰ Bradford Vivian, "Jefferson's Other," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 3 (August 2002): 284.

⁸¹ Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 70–71.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 307–310.

⁸⁴ Charles E. Morris III, "My Old Kentucky Homo: Abraham Lincoln, Larry Kramer, and the Politics of Queer Public Memory," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 89–114.

trace, a possible indication, a hint of history that contaminates the innocence of all things.”⁸⁵

Scholars such as John Bodnar explore the power direction of public narratives—who decides what is codifiable and how. His work highlights how collaborative memory work is in terms of particular regional, the *vernacular*, and nation-state as a whole, the *official*, politics. Bodnar defines public memory as a “body of beliefs and ideas about the past” used to translate the past, present and even the future into useful terms.⁸⁶ This body is shaped by the clashes between the *official* and the *vernacular*. Regionalist and specialized concerns give rise to vernacular expressions that are often at odds with broader official concerns that circulate around concerns of the state as a whole however there is a kind of give and take between the two that is most pronounced in American patriotic expressions within public memory that can serve to satiate vernacular concerns.⁸⁷

However, the binary between dictated history and culture from above and informed from below has been challenged. Carole Blair questions the practices of locating “preferred” and “dominant” readings and the assumptions inherent in that delineation.⁸⁸ To privilege the audiences’ readings first requires that reading be relatively consistent which may be an inappropriate assumption. To take the NPS’ reading of a site is to assume the NPS is a unified organization of interpreters which is not true. Park superintendents can, at times, have strong autonomy as evidenced by the second and especially the fourth chapters. In the third chapter, it is clear that rangers, too, adapt interpretations based on their own interests and those they perceive in the audience. All such factors also shift throughout time as the political, budgetary and local climates change. Memory, even in well organized institutions like the NPS is a moving target.

⁸⁵ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 17.

⁸⁶ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 15.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁸ Carole Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places,” *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 271–94.

Locating the preferred or dominant reading is important as it is the means by which we uncover and strategize the alternative and subversive readings that may promise politically transformative properties. But even if the vernacular or popular memory of local interests could be located with confidence, David Glassberg points out that “pitting” the official as national against the vernacular as local does not account for a great number of memory contestations; reality quickly outstrips the binary.⁸⁹ He argues that patriotic national narratives can erupt from the grassroots and exercise formidable influence on what it means to be not just a local citizen but also a national patriot. This project looks to visual, spatial and discursive practices to locate the threads of memory work that weave the park’s story.

Kendall Phillips’ most recent essay forwards three categories of memory that further complicate the *official* and *vernacular* binary. Based on his previous work that delineated a relationship between public and memory as that which is either publically remembered by specific groups and or that which is remembered made public, Phillips develops a new triad of concepts: *public memory* as it was theorized as shared memory by public groups, *public remembrance* and *public recollection*. Public remembrance refers to the “dominant, reified and calcified forms of remembrance that serve to establish broader frameworks which the fantasies of public memory are contained and proscribed.”⁹⁰ Especially strong narratives like those cemented into the national landscape along the Washington Mall exemplify that more static public remembrance through which other memories are translated. Public recollection exists between memory and remembrance. It is the situation of struggle between the two which can alter the frameworks of public remembrance but also disciplines the public memories that work

⁸⁹ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 12.

⁹⁰ Phillips, “The Failure of Memory,” 219.

to disrupt it. Phillips argues that the public remembrance are rooted in forms “as objects inserted into this space of memory” like those on the Washington Mall.⁹¹

Material and Space

Evident throughout this review is the role of material objects as important sources for memory and often as the physical sites where memory contestation is played out. Public memory scholars Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson and Brian L. Ott summarize six essential assumptions in the field of which many I have already elucidated. At this point I want to examine what they list as their last two assumptions about public memory that “memory relies on material and/or symbolic supports” and that “memory has a history.”⁹² Together these ideas mean that matter matters for memory and that the way matter has mattered has a history itself. In this sense, analysis of any NPS site is important because it is the matter memory flourishes from but it must also engage with the history of how that site became the site that it is. What was the restoration process like? Did demonstrations or physical alterations transform the site’s cultural currency?

To delve into questions about the way matter has become an important rhetorical element, I, in part, review materiality’s role in the field. I draw from theorists and critics who discuss material as well as those who focus on how space factors into memory work. I do not register an important distinction between rhetoric of materiality and rhetoric of space. Most critics analyze the material within spaces or discuss the two almost seamlessly. What binds the two concepts together is their physicality and substantive characteristics. To read either is to be aware that environment matters just as matter is environment.

Barbara Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites outline the material turn in rhetoric which theorists like Kenneth Burke and Michael Calvin McGee helped shape. It is one where “a notion of subjectivity inflected toward the practical or material force of living within the social and

⁹¹ Ibid., 220.

⁹² Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, “Introduction,” 6.

political orbits of symbolicity.”⁹³ Theorists like Foucault, Lacan and Derrida are responsible for “inspiring a shift of theoretical and critical interest in the field from *rhetorical materialism* to *rhetoric’s materiality*.”⁹⁴ Thus McGee’s foundational essay, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” poses not the question of “*what is rhetoric?*” but instead “*What legitimizes the theory of rhetoric?*”⁹⁵ His answer is that “directly and explicitly” evaluate the role of the object in the rhetoric that seeks to communicate it. McGee is interested in reassessing rhetoric through the material world which serves not so much as a study of “things” but “a palpable and undeniable social and political force.” Additionally, McGee is not simply arguing that *matter matters*, he is also working to snatch rhetoric from the hands of those who would collapse it to its mere artistic qualities, “it is a medium, a bridge among human beings, the social equivalent of a verb in a sentence.”⁹⁶ The function of rhetoric then should be the theorist and critic’s (ideally for McGee each scholar is both) focus on *how* and *through what* rhetoric functions. This, he argues forcefully, should be the field’s immediate concern.

Pierre Nora begins some of the more detailed analysis of the nexus betwixt memory and materiality in developing the concept of “*les lieux de mémoire*” which is a “sites of memory.”⁹⁷ Nora famously posits that “we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.”⁹⁸ From his perspective, memory is “life... in permanent evolution” and “a bond tying us to the eternal present” whereas “history is a representation of the past” which is “always problematic and incomplete.” His interpretation of memory regards any “appearance of a trace, of mediation, of distance” to be the realm of history. To the contrary of what numerous scholars have said

⁹³ Biesecker and Lucaites, “Introduction,” 3.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁵ McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” 19.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

since, he argues that memory and history “appear to be in fundamental opposition.”⁹⁹ In a world of rapidly decreasing “living memory” we try to stabilize past and thus present identities by investing memory into places. Our increased obsession with memory causes a boom in archiving which explains, in part, the parallel memorial boom Erica Doss discusses in her work, *Memorial Mania*.

The importance of space as material to memory is explored inside and outside the field of rhetoric. In the late 1950s Gaston Bachelard explored the phenomenological relationship between space, time and an individually experienced memory. Bachelard’s observations echo the Greek theories of space and memory. He posits:

“Here **space is everything**, for time ceases to quicken memory. Memory –what a strong thing it is! –does not record concrete duration... The finest specimens of fossilized duration concretized as a result of long sojourn, are to be found in and through space. The unconscious abides. **Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are.**”¹⁰⁰

This project should demonstrate how memories are anything but motionless. Even when the past is rooted in present spatial terms, the present needs are shifting and doing so in various ways for different groups. Rhetorical critics take the rhetoric of materiality seriously as well and have developed work on the rhetoric of space. In his classic work on nostalgic consumption in Pasadena, CA, Dickinson argues that “contemporary identities are performances that utilize the resources of memory; these performances occur in and are structured by landscapes of consumption.”¹⁰¹ Landscapes, or spaces, provide a much needed “grammar” for the inventive processes of identity fashioning. The consistent interplay between the three elements of space, memory and identity is evident in his tracing of them in classical Greek rhetorical theory where

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁰ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 9. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰¹ Dickinson, “Memories for Sale,” 2.

“memories are encoded in spatial structures for the purpose of engaging audiences in matters of belief and action.”¹⁰² Thus we see rhetorical encoding in space. In later work Stewart and Dickinson clarify the rhetorical nature of *place*. They rely on Raka Shome and Meaghan Morris to discuss the “somewhere” and “sense of place” that settings evoke and situate subjectivities in. They argue that space becomes place through human efforts and that “place making is a distinctly communicative practice, for it is through a series of (often nonverbal) forms and signs that places make a claim to placeness.”¹⁰³ The designed place invokes a grammar which identities must contend with. The materiality of space is again an important medium for symbolic exchange.

Many historians also differentiate, like Nora, history from memory and center the distinction, at least in part, to the role of materiality as a medium for memory. Historian David Glassberg agrees that material space serves political and ideological purposes as “the histories we tell not only communicate our political ideologies and group identities, but also orient us in the environment,” because “public histories provide meaning to places.”¹⁰⁴ He explains his own material turn as a historian because although professional historians are taught “an indifference to place” in actuality “the memory of a place becomes a language through which we recall our past social networks and emotions.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, he adds, many controversial or muddled events enjoy more clarity after they have been rooted in a place lost or a place newly-found.

According to Glassberg, placelessness is often believed to be a uniquely American problem due to the mobile culture that precludes in most cases a historical consciousness to

¹⁰² Ibid., 3.

¹⁰³ Jessie Stewart and Greg Dickinson, “Enunciating Locality in the Postmodern Suburb: Flatiron Crossing and the Colorado Lifestyle,” *Western Journal of Communication* 72, no. 3 (July 2008): 283.

¹⁰⁴ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 111, 115.

develop through a more intimate sense of or investment in place.¹⁰⁶ While the “interchangeability of places” marks American culture, he argues that the theory of placelessness does not reflect the distinction between those whose class will decide their mobility and those who have the resources to dictate it for themselves. Additionally, placelessness may suffer from critics’ romantic ideas of the “‘folk’ living on the land.”¹⁰⁷ While this form of anxiety rooted in an uprooting should be troubled, it is an element of a globalizing world and it helps memory scholars understand, at least in part, society’s obsession with the material trace.

While McGee’s essay is regarded as a breakthrough for rhetorical scholars trying to grapple with the questions raised by postmodern theory, Jack Selzer explains in 1999 that only a mere handful of “stars” in the field of rhetoric responded to the postmodern and post structural call to better articulate the material situatedness of rhetorical events. The need, he explains, is still great especially in terms of how the body is implicated by the material world.¹⁰⁸ The continued uptake is seen in visual rhetoric, rhetoric of space, and studies of museum and memorial rhetorics.

Many public memory and rhetorical scholars take McGee’s call to get out of the lab seriously and engage in a kind of on-site reading of museums and memorials. Accounts of significant memory places usually include museum and memorial spaces as these are highly visible and unquestionably symbolic elements of the cultural landscape. Carole Blair’s earlier essay, “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality,” does an excellent job of laying the groundwork necessary for many others who follow her as the body of literature describing memorial and museum rhetorics grows. She explains that though theorists

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 120.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 120–122.

¹⁰⁸ Jack Selzer, “Habeas Corpus: An Introduction,” in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Sharon Crowley and Jack Selzer (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 9.

have struggled with the appropriate language with which to describe the workings of and by materiality, our everyday metaphors reflects an intimate relationship between language and physicality. In analysis that established a more substantial foundation for rhetorical criticisms of memorials, Blair explores the unique experiences of memorials through their material expression. She further outlines multiple issues including text durability and intertextuality, demonstrating across five separate US Memorials that each accomplishes significant rhetorical work.¹⁰⁹

In the last decade, analyses of memorial and museum rhetorics has flourished. For example, Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki published a set of significant articles that center on different museums within the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, WY.¹¹⁰ Each piece demonstrates a methodological approach that respects the material turn, its influence on memory and thus seriously works to engage with the more holistic context of each museum as it is experienced by visitors. Teresa Bergman's book, *Exhibiting Patriotism*, explores the memory work of numerous NPS sites which each offer helpful insight into NPS memory management.¹¹¹ She argues that NPS sites influence wide-spread attitudes regarding citizenship and who that excludes thus the contestations are important lessons in how the nation of citizens understands its history and its present. These authors are among but a few of those rhetorical scholars who read National Park Service sites, museum spaces, and public memorials for the matter that makes them matter. Often drawn to the controversies memory sites are known for, public memory and

¹⁰⁹ Blair, "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality," 34.

¹¹⁰ Eric Aoki, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, "Memory and the West Reflections on Place, Practice, and Performance," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 3–5; Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 2006): 27–47; Brian L. Ott, Eric Aoki, and Greg Dickinson, "Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns: Presence and Absence at the Cody Firearms Museum," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2011): 215–39.

¹¹¹ Teresa Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism: Creating and Contesting Interpretations of American Historic Sites* (Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press, 2013).

memorial/museum scholars care for the public narratives in circulation and the physical strategies through which they are enunciated.

Approach to the Text

My project relies on two methods that, when combined, provide multifaceted analysis appropriate for the interactive texts. On the one hand, I draw heavily from the tools of rhetorical criticism that take materiality and the rhetoric of space seriously. As a critic trained in rhetoric, I read texts for the multiplicity of meanings they suggest, respond to and call into being. The textual analysis is of exhibit layouts and details in addition to a close look at a range of NPS documentation including administrative histories, ethnographic studies, and visitor brochures. The material context is especially powerful for a historic site. This lens is an important element that informs my focus on places of memory.

But how are these practices of reading applied? The second layer of my methodology invokes a meld of rhetorical ethnography or field methods as theorized by Phaedra Pezzullo, Aaron Hess and the rhetorical reading of practices of public memory in museums and memorial from scholars such as Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson and Brian L. Ott (just to name a few) to guide my research as a specific kind of participant-observer and textual critic. I have tried to immerse myself in what Erving Goffman calls the “backstage” and “front stage” processes.¹¹² In the backstage, I have informally talked with rangers and park staff about how the park works and how decisions are made while also worked through what the park has archived as of now regarding the memory contests and interpretive design of the park. On the front stage, I have not only attended to park tours, special events and watched visitors but also been attentive to the park’s media coverage, considerable website overhaul and facebook practices for the last year. I clearly do not presume to write as an ambassador for the park or the NPS in any form. I have

¹¹² Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

neither worked at the park nor, even, volunteered and have thus no formal training. However, I am a lot like a large number of visitors (not the majority, the majority seem to be women with younger family members¹¹³) who are young, female college students from surrounding colleges and universities. My observations are as a female graduate student fascinated by the way the feminist movement's memory is materially fashioned and practiced.

In terms of my physical engagement with the sites I take a page from Hess' conception of critical-rhetorical ethnography and explain how museum and memorial analyses in the field of rhetoric utilize a similar method. Hess is intent on studying advocacy and deliberation through "a locally situated and experiential approach to the process and production of texts."¹¹⁴ There is productive overlap between his method and the rhetorical analysis of museums and memorials. Both perspectives, if they are even so distinct from each other, privilege the position of the researcher amidst circulating arguments. In Hess' project, critical rhetorical ethnographers do more than examine arguments as they are made, they in fact embody and enact advocacy to better understand the inventive and argumentative practices.¹¹⁵ In the museum and memorial projects conducted in the field of rhetoric¹¹⁶ critics position themselves alongside the visitor/as visitors to read the public memory work on citizenship, activism and history. Hess' project tries to capture the everyday argumentative strategies that are too often overlooked and cannot be

¹¹³ The observation of visitor makeup is echoed by several park rangers. Many school children have also explored the park through school sponsored field trips.

¹¹⁴ Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 2 (2011): 128.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 128–129.

¹¹⁶ Armada, "Memorial Agon"; V. William Balthrop, Carole Blair, and Neil Michel, "The Presence of the Present: Hijacking 'The Good War'?", *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 2 (April 3, 2010): 170–207; Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, no. 3 (August 1991): 263; Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson, "Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns"; Carly S. Woods, Joshua P. Ewalt, and Sara J. Baker, "A Matter of Regionalism: Remembering Brandon Teena and Willa Cather at the Nebraska History Museum," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 3 (August 2013): 341–63; Aoki, Dickinson, and Ott, "Memory and the West Reflections on Place, Practice, and Performance"; Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, "Introduction"; *ibid.*; Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting." These are examples from that body of literature.

quantified for study. The strategies of museums and memorials are similarly “everyday” in that they continuously affect visitors and national narratives. Blair, for example, continually references the reactions of other visitors and uses this as a reference point to describe the effects of a memorial.¹¹⁷ In a more intimate reading, Ott et. al draw overtly from their personal perspectives on guns and the effect this may have on their reading of the Cody Firearms Museum.¹¹⁸ While one can certainly analyze President Barak Obama's April 2013 Planned Parenthood speech, it is also a fruitful endeavor to analyze the women's rights exhibit space that Superintendent Ami Ghazala and Park Historian Vivien Rose guided the president through. This is a space that thousands of visitors self-tour each year. When President Obama expresses pride in the park and pronounced gratitude through the guestbook for the park's efforts in telling the stories that it does then we can see how important it is to analyze what is being endorsed at the time not only through the NPS ethos but the powerful presidential signature.

My embodied observations have been through unstructured visits to the site as a tourist interested in which stories the park tells. When I refer to “locals” I do not include myself though I have lived around Seneca County for the last four years. I experience the park as an “outsider” tourist interested in how the park strikes the balance between varying interests (especially those of feminists with their “Mecca”¹¹⁹ and locals with their “home”), certainly a balance that memory sites struggle to establish and maintain.¹²⁰ My visits focus more on analyzing the *how* of the story—the matrices of rhetorical strategies that communicate specific versions of history. I will

¹¹⁷ Blair, “Reflections on Criticism and Bodies.” In this piece she specifically references the difficulty she and other visitors had recovering from the trauma of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Additionally, she uses overheard comments by visitors at the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, MO to help gauge the effect of the arch in inspiring (or not) what the architect had intended.

¹¹⁸ Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson, “Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns.”

¹¹⁹ Conard, “‘All Men and Women Are Created Equal’: An Administrative History of Women's Rights National Historical Park,” 210; Heather Lee Miller, Emily Greenwald, and Dawn Vogel, *Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, Women's Rights National Historical Park* (National Park Service Northeast Region Ethnography Program, June 3, 2009), 150, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/wori/wori_ethnography.pdf.

¹²⁰ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 159.

embed myself in several tours of the same sites in order to read across different ranger's interpretation styles. Layering experiences also increases the diversity of fellow tourists I will be participating with. This approach may provide interesting insight into the practices of touring "authentic" space and material, the artifacts that ground the park's existence in the specific location of Seneca County, NY.

By positioning myself as a visitor experiencing the exhibits alongside others I can better engage with how visitors interpret or are guided to interpret these texts. Based on Hess, Pezzulo and rhetorical scholars studying museums and memorials, my immersion into the museum assumes that the interaction between visitors and exhibits is a text that must be read as it circulates dynamically. Blair acknowledges in her "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies," that the body and its implication in criticism is an important development and that researcher presence remains an important part of reading material texts.¹²¹ We recognize that there is something unique to "being there" and privilege the critics who have. Critically constructed/mediated reproductions have "flattening effects" that neglect the "substance," "presence" and "significance" of matter.¹²² It is then no surprise that her work on memorials often cites visitor practices and reactions as evidence to the material's rhetorical effects. McGee, in his call for more materially grounded rhetoric, also privileges experience in rhetorical criticism. He argues that when one is outside of the "laboratory" and inside the experience then the critic can better ascertain how the web of "relationships which 'speaker/speech/audience/occasion/change' bear to one another in actual human experience."¹²³ The "interconnected[ness]" between bodies and their environments, Phaedra Pezzullo argues, "suggest the need to account for and to reassess the blurred and interdependent categories of the

¹²¹ Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies," 272–273.

¹²² Ibid., 275.

¹²³ McGee, "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," 28.

material and the symbolic, the organic and the inorganic, the emotional and the reasonable.”¹²⁴

To do so, critics must mindfully engage, especially to include those factors of rhetorical discourse that would otherwise not be recorded due to the primacy of objectivity and erasure of the body.¹²⁵ Attention to the “ecosystem” that circulates narratives is essential and requires onsite observations.

Chapter Overview

The chapters unfold in a manner that attempts to account for the movement of the visitor. I begin by examining the visual and spatial practices of the Visitor Center and then turn to the Chapel and Stanton house tours. An invested visitor will do more than self-tour the Visitor Center. He or she will also experience the two tours in Seneca Falls if not also the seasonal Waterloo tours. While my conceptual tool kit is slightly different in each chapter, I work to adapt for the moving target that is a multidimensional experience, especially when comparing the Visitor Center with the historic sites. The last part of analysis focuses on an important memory contest in 1995 and the narratives at stake on each side of the debate. The last chapter will engage with a single photographic image in the Visitor Center and its role as an important piece of visual rhetoric in expressing the park’s conflicted vision and purpose. The chapters highlight different public memory factors but all center on the material memory work and its implications for the social movement so many feminists claim was born in Seneca County’s historic spaces.

In the first chapter, I analyze the Visitor Center which presents numerous displays that impart a progressive story of the women’s rights movement from its temperance roots into the US legislation of the 1990s. That this layout has an overtly progressive tone is not unique for an

¹²⁴ Phaedra C. Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 11.

¹²⁵ Phaedra C. Pezzullo, “Resisting ‘National Breast Cancer Awareness Month’: The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and Their Cultural Performances,” in *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, ed. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen H. Browne, Third edition (State College, Pennsylvania: Strata Pub., Inc, 2013), 207.

NPS interpretation project however it is predictably incomplete in terms of the women's rights movement's controversial internal and external clashes. I analyze the visual and spatial strategies used in the Visitor Center. The second floor space is sometimes described as confusing because of the enormous variety of texts, colors and displays packed into a relatively small museum space. Taking "politics of location" seriously, I examine the meshing of post-1848 women's histories (visually portrayed in photo collages) that provide visitors little impetus to engage with their own privilege. The exhibits encourage a global or universal sisterhood feminist perspective with all of the damaging erasure that entails.

The exhibit exists on a polarized political scene where popular culture reinforces the "F" word status of feminism yet intellectuals and activists are seriously involved in analyzing the politics of gendered power on a daily basis. For all intents and purposes, I read women's history through the second floor exhibit as troubled in largely unembarrassing, uncomplicated ways. The women's rights movement experienced enormous growing pains amidst cries of internal racist, classist and homophobic discourse and practices. The absence of shame in an NPS site designed in the early 1990s is not unusual although Erica Doss explains that after the late 1990s the NPS exhibited a more reflexive attitude about commemorating "sites of shame" for the purpose of capturing a more complicated reality.¹²⁶ For example, anti-racist and queer challenges to white feminism are largely muffled if present at all in the chorus of universal sisterhood. The exhibit champions a culturally viable idealized heroine while hardly invoking the intersectional politics of identity and multifaceted oppressions. I am interested in the perspectives, voices and bodies that are muted by the progressive narrative and the strategies navigated through material artifacts. Pinpointing the exhibit's specific strategies of influence on public memory may provide some insight on future exhibit designs.

¹²⁶ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 258.

The second chapter engages with the literal “politics of location” (as Raka Some urges)¹²⁷ and mode of objective authenticity¹²⁸ expressed in the twice daily Chapel and Stanton house tours. The tours provide visitors an introduction to the lives of the men and women who organized the convention, the materials that remain from their lives and some of the events following the Convention. I engage a Foucauldian reading of the space and material to discern, in part, the authorized field of relationships and mode of authenticity. Foucault’s methodological focus on space and the practices within them helped me understand the relationship between space, authenticity and discourse. I mean to study how the bodies of the visitor and rangers are placed in relationship to “authentic” and thus historically significant spaces and material. The buildings are largely devoid of material because the buildings were recovered so long after the original event, thus rangers rely on different strategies to meet visitors’ expectations for authentic history while, at the same time, constructing those expectations. How tours involve visitors through the site elucidates the types of knowledge privileged in these spaces. Tour practices bear on the park’s prized origin story. To claim a specific origin story is to claim a larger set of knowledge producing relationships.

In the third chapter, I examine a WRNHP photograph on exhibit in the Visitor Center and describe its visual rhetoric context and the iconoclasm imposed on the image. The photo depicts a black activist, Gwenn Craig, holding a sign that reads “BLACK LESBIAN FEMINIST” and came to be the focal point of a heated debate about the park’s purpose and scope that peaked in 1995 when the Park Superintendent unilaterally removed it. Though activist and National Park Headquarters pressure ensured she quickly reinstate the photograph to its original and prominent

¹²⁷ Raka Shome, “Space Matters: The Power and Practice of Space,” *Communication Theory* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2003): 39–56.

¹²⁸ Ning Wang, “Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 26, no. 2 (April 1, 1999): 349–70.

position, the implications of the dispute reverberated through the following Women's Rights National Historical Park internal reviews and studies. The contested memory work of the park's exhibits pronounced itself loudly on the face of the photograph as an acute point of anxiety for years to follow.

To better understand visual rhetoric criticism that practices iconophilic relationships to images, I analyze the *image vernaculars*¹²⁹ that circulated at the time of the contestation, an iconoclastic moment in which factions read Gwenn Craig's racial and lesbian "flaunting" as an affront. It is because of how her body is read that this one element of a larger exhibit proved so controversial. I read the photograph in reference to its immediate context to Frederick Douglass' un-racialized and un-radical depiction, the white and "safely" heterosexual protestor in the photograph directly adjacent and the internal discourse of the NPS. I argue that the photograph's polemic presence is unsettling enough to the underlying narrative of the WRNHP that it incited rigorous reflection about the goals and parameters of the park not just before the iconoclastic act but also in the internal studies and reports for years after. Reading the communities of Seneca County is an important element as it is presumably these interests to which the superintendent meant to "re-align" with.

The goals of this thesis are modest. The WRNHP is steward of historically significant sites linked to a powerful activist force: the women's rights movement. What is said about the origins of the women's rights movement certainly has implications for how the movement in its modern forms is understood. The park makes these sites legible based, in part, on historical evidence, historian's accounts and NPS supervision and directives. As a prominent program with government funding, the park wields considerable force in in/forming public memory. Visitors'

¹²⁹ Cara A. Finnegan, "Recognizing Lincoln: Image Vernaculars in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2005): 31–57.

experiences of the sites—as designed spaces—are important arenas ripe for critical examination. My driving questions are these: How does the NPS present history of a social movement still in movement? *Which* slices of history are shared? *How* are they enunciated visually, spatially and materially? What are the pedagogical implications for feminism and the continuing women's rights movement? These questions cannot be answered fully, in part, because the park is a moving target that is continually morphing in a larger context that is itself unstable.

Chapter 2

No Space for Seeing Solidarity: The Visitor Center's Visual and Spatial Strategies

The Women's Rights National Historical Park operates as a collection of urban sites across two rural cities: Seneca Falls and Waterloo, New York. National Park Service marketing online and in brochures highlight the Visitor Center for its role to contextualize the remaining dispersed park sites. Tours through the Women's Rights National Historical Park historic homes and especially the Wesleyan Chapel suffer a dearth of artifacts and visual dynamics, however, park visitors are first oriented to the memory sites by the visually rich Visitor Center. For those unfamiliar with American history, the historic buildings necessitate an expert to explain their function and significance whereas the visitor center is designed to be self-toured. One is guided by the visual elements and museum-like exhibit designs and for that reason formal tours rarely happen. This chapter analyzes the first visited and most central location of the Women's Rights National Historical Park where the women's rights origin story is connected to contemporary women's activities. My analysis begins in the first spaces visitors experience to understand the way public memory is both framed from the first and then layered upon throughout other sites.

The Visitor Center's primary function is to render the concerns of the Convention organizers and attendees alive and relevant. Present and former park Superintendents may have different approaches to what the park will cover in terms of timeline content but all agree that history is important because it impacts modern lives. Interpretive planning at the park foregrounds memory as a transformative tool as an orientation that follows an NPS trend.

Freeman Tilden's influential 1957 text *Interpreting Our Heritage*, had profound effects on NPS strategies which influenced a turn toward the increasingly personal, contextual and relevant.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Tilden is widely read by NPS rangers and curators and is referenced heavily in NPS literature. The NPS Freeman Tilden Award is given to an outstanding and creative NPS staff and is prefaced by a quote from Tilden: The

Especially where historic resources are concerned, the NPS interpretive plans work to engender historic, social and political awareness regarding citizenship. John Bodnar's chapter dedicated to the memory work of NPS citizen making in *Remaking America* details the scrutiny historic interpretation undergoes to develop a national identity. Memory, then, is honed for its political capacity to encourage appropriate actors in terms of the state. Parks salute military heroes regularly. Although with different strategies, parks sometimes celebrate activists who valued freedom and enfranchisement; especially the latter which serves as the icon of a healthy and functioning democracy.

Of course, memory sites are always mediated and often deeply political. The WRNHP overtly serves political functions like hosting naturalization ceremonies, welcoming dignitaries and providing civic education through historical examples like Stanton and Anthony. Teresa Bergman demonstrated in *Exhibiting Patriotism* that the fluid nature of civic identities and values often come into conflict on NPS grounds especially because so much is at stake as government supported interpretation carries hefty ethos.¹³¹ These "official" memories are presented as unbiased and have unique persuasive power due to the monopoly the NPS exercises over the spatial components of memory. In these officiated memory sites, activist public memory can be diminished through spatial manipulation. Resistance is glossed over on Alcatraz Island where there is little material evidence and spatial connection offered of the Native American months long occupation¹³² or cut out as the National Civil Rights Museum (though not a

interpreter who creates a whole, pares away all the obfuscating minor detail and drives straight toward the perfection of his story will find that his hearers are walking along with him - are companions on the march. At some certain point it becomes their story as much as his. Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed., expanded and updated (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

¹³¹ Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism*, 17.

¹³² Teresa Bergman and Cynthia Duquette Smith, "You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 160–88.

government-run museum) spatially forced activist Jacqueline Smith's resistant memory efforts to the outskirts of the museum parameters.¹³³ Bergman's collection of case studies demonstrates that though NPS public memory work is frequently one-sided and conservative. For example, in the contestation over the Lincoln Memorial orientation film battled over "whose civil rights" would win the distinctive connection to Lincoln's memory.¹³⁴ The contest foregrounded conservative depictions of pro-war and pro-gun rallies versus images from women's rights and gay rights rallies when illustrating the memorials cultural significance. While national icons frequently express conservative values regarding citizenship,¹³⁵ Bergman marks instances where the NPS has diversified interpretation to allow for more audience-centered and –determined memory work as in the case of the Alamo and the California State Railroad Museum. The mapping of memory contestations can risk oversimplifying the myriad of memory accounts working in spaces just as David Glassberg marks the positive development in memory studies which go beyond the "official" versus "vernacular" binary.¹³⁶ At the same time, attention to which forces underwrite spatial design is imperative to piecing how spaces are made to mean.

This chapter analyzes how the Visitor Center, part of an "official" memory project, is deeply invested in folding time to draw out the central similarities of historic activism and civic engagement today through the memory of American heroes and heroines who asserted their rights in line with the dimensions of the modern voting citizen. There are two central questions of this study. First, which spatial and visual strategies most prominently impress a particular

¹³³ Bernard J. Armada, "Memory's Execution: (Dis)placing the Dissident Body," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 216–37.

¹³⁴ Teresa Bergman, "Sex and Gender in the Lincoln Memorial: The Politics of Interpreting Lincoln's Legacy," in *Exhibiting Patriotism: Creating and Contesting Interpretations of American Historic Sites* (Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press, 2013), chap. 4.

¹³⁵ Albert Boime, *The Unveiling of the National Icons: A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a Nationalist Era*, Cambridge Studies in American Visual Culture (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹³⁶ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 12.

memory of women's activism? And second, what are the political implications of that particular account for feminism? Specifically, I analyze the material memory work in the Visitor Center exhibit spaces to better understand the political implications in terms of feminist sisterhood and solidarity.

The memories presented encourage specific kinds of relations among visitors, especially those who would gain inspiration from the park. I do not assume that the goals of the NPS are overtly or even covertly feminist. I do, however, take guidance from factors unique to the WRNHP (including formative leadership, out-reach activities and programming) and recognize significant political similarities. Former Superintendent Linda Canzanelli shaped the park's orientation to the origin story and the means through which it is expressed which several current and past rangers recognize as provocative.¹³⁷ The park unabashedly traces the remnants of 1848 politics in the modern visitor's lived experiences. She celebrated the tearful interactions visitors first had with the "controversial exhibits" in the Visitor Center where connections were forged regarding the dimensions of discrimination that touched their lives.¹³⁸ Similarly, Park Historian and women's historian Vivien Rose worked tirelessly to support Canzanelli and foster ties between the park and classroom education and academic research. Reflecting on her decision to stay at the park for more than a decade and counting, Rose explains, "Between twenty and twenty-five thousand people walk through these exhibits every year, and I've watched lives change downstairs in our exhibits, and I've talked to people from other countries who are

¹³⁷ Historian Vivien Rose and former superintendent Linda Canzanelli both recognize the park's relatively radical nature in their interviews with Rebecca Conrad and Elizabeth Smith (which I am citing continually and informs the Administrative History.) More than that, various discussions with rangers also helped me understand that they had an impression that the park was a special element in the NPS system.

¹³⁸ Conrad and Smith, "Linda Canzanelli," 8.

incredibly moved by what they see here.”¹³⁹ The park’s role in supporting feminist artists and film documentaries in their temporary exhibit spaces while inviting feminist academics to give talks (the park’s connection to academics at Hobart and Williams Smith College is remarkably strong and draws in speakers on a wide range of international women’s topics) also demonstrates a commitment to education about a feminist past toward a critically engaged future. With such goals in mind, I hold a critical lens to the park. I read the space and visual strategies for two possible sets of readings, though a range of readings outside and in-between is also possible.

At the point where women’s history is animated to empower visitors, I explore the feminist implications by asking what the Visitor Center nominates through the visual and spatial interpretive strategies. The Visitor Center articulates women’s history in a fashion that renders certain feminist politics more legible. First, I explain the distinction between universal or global sisterhood and feminist solidarity to examine the implications of each approach. Second, I provide a brief overview of museum spaces in feminist exhibits to highlight the significance of spatial ordering and visitor autonomy for message retention. Finally, I argue that the park’s cultural and political significance is invested in women’s rights as a contemporary, evolving movement. In the third section, I describe the spatial layout and visual dimensions which promote that connection. The exhibits on the first and then again on the second floor begin in the specific grounding context of the convention and cast a wide post-convention net of women’s activities and struggles. The exhibits’ visual strategies avoid academic jargon and do not explain complicated concepts of feminism. As a result, I argue that the exhibits lend themselves to be read as a universal, white-washed Sisterhood which allows privilege to pass through the space unchecked, unchallenged and unquestioned. This analysis works toward a clearer understanding

¹³⁹ Rebecca Conard and Elizabeth Smith, “Vivien Rose” (National Park Service, July 17, 2008), 21, Women’s Rights National Historical Park; 12, Vivien Rose, National Park Service; Women’s Rights National Historical Park.

of what a museum of movement or a museum in movement could look like. How can a memory site convey a historical social movement that is still in progress without calcifying the movement's spark?

The Politics of Universal Sisterhood and Feminist Solidarity

There is a biological essentialism which undergirds some unfortunate understandings of universal sisterhood where solidarity stems from biological sameness. The concept has little outright currency, especially as it is blended with the more persuasive notion that the feminine experience, living as a woman in a patriarchal world, gives woman a special access to truth, reality and each other as women. In this second sense, oppression is understood as the binding force of a sisterhood the world over. Chandra Talpade Mohanty calls this problematic approach the *feminist osmosis thesis* which, again, assumes that “being female and being feminist are one in the same; we are all oppressed and hence we all resist.”¹⁴⁰ Mohanty's detailed criticism points out the ahistorical assumptions of the thesis which feminists like Robin Morgan (editor of and contributor to the influential 1984 *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*) popularized with “dangerous implications for women who do not and cannot speak from a location of white, Western, middle-class privilege.”¹⁴¹ From such a starting point, solutions adhere to “transcendence rather than engagement” thus leaving privilege intact.¹⁴² Global sisterhood, then, universalizes through perhaps unintended but effective erasure of difference. A second implication, Mohanty points out, is the construction of woman as void of agency:

Universal sisterhood, defined as the transcendence of the “male” world, thus ends up being a middle-class, psychologized notion that effectively erases material and

¹⁴⁰ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2003), 112.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴² Ibid.

ideological power differences within and among groups of women, especially between First and Third World women (and, paradoxically, removes us all as actors from history and politics)... Ultimately in this reductive utopian vision, men participate in politics while women can only hope to transcend it.¹⁴³

The frame, intended to grasp and empower a world full of women who suffer recognizably patriarchal oppressive forces, is notoriously shaped and employed by women who are then not implicated from within their privileged location. Sisterhood insulates. To see oneself as having had agency would likely require close examination of the varying levels of power that flow (albeit discontinuously at times) through the white Western bodies and prompt: where has power been misused by sisters against sisters?

In place of universal sisterhood, Mohanty recognizes the efforts toward a political sense of solidarity understood “in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships” instead of “assuming an enforced commonality of oppression.” Instead, “the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together.”¹⁴⁴ Of course, Mohanty is not the first feminist to critically engage white universal sisterhood; she stands amidst the reflections of women of color before her. In the Preface of the 1981 anthology *This Bridge Called my Back*, Cherrie Moraga explains a similar sense of sisterhood that is won through critical and reflexive labor rather than given based on ones being a woman in a patriarchal world. In this sensitive and heartfelt memory, Moraga demonstrates the richness of forged sisterhood:

She kisses me. Then grabbing my shoulders she says, very solid-like, “we’re sisters.” I nod, put myself into bed, and roll around with this word, *sisters*, for two hours before sleep takes on. I earned this with Barbara. It is not a given between us – Chicana and Black – to come to see each other as sisters. This is not a given. I keep wanting to repeat over and over and over again, the pain and shock of difference, the joy of commonness,

¹⁴³ Ibid., 116.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

the exhilaration of meeting through incredible odds against it. But the passage is *through*, not over, not by, not around, but through.¹⁴⁵

The engagement, Moraga explains, is fraught with “pain and shock of difference” against “incredible odds.” Her emphasis on working through difference rather than over, by or around denounces the politics of transcendence by presenting the only feasible option of messy, disorderly engagement. *This Bridge Called My Back* stresses that women of color are consistently made to forge alone. In the backdrop of universal sisterhood, the onus is placed on the disenfranchised and silenced to inject reflexivity at the cost of their own bodies. Like so many others in the anthology, Moraga proclaims: “I cannot continue to use my body to be walked over to make a connection.”¹⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Anzaldúa rages against the white strictures of the movement arguing that Third World women of color are crushingly tokenized, “reduced to purveyors of resource lists” and at risk of acquiescing to white feminist’s under-radicalized notions.¹⁴⁷ White feminists do not only place impediments on women of color by asking them to do the bridging but they also face different kinds of dangers, dangers that must be gone *through*. Women of color occupy a unique set of positions in the movement:

...the woman of color is invisible both in the white male mainstream world and in the white women’s feminist world, though in the latter this is gradually changing. The *lesbian* of color is not only invisible, she doesn’t even exist. Our speech, too, is inaudible. We speak in tongues like the outcast and the insane.¹⁴⁸

Anzaldúa articulates the otherization many women of color experienced when white feminists enacted universal sisterhood. White feminists policed discourse and controlled what resources

¹⁴⁵ Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 1st ed (Watertown, Mass: Persephone Press, 1981), XIV. Emphasis hers.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., XV.

¹⁴⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers,” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 1st ed (Watertown, Mass: Persephone Press, 1981), 167.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 165.

the movement had and quelled criticisms of the movement's internal oppressions. Universal gender claims rendered unintelligible the lives of those from different histories.

While the history of sisterhood is fraught with inequities and contradictory violence, many feminist theorists have argued the concept can be rescued if it is understood as an active way of living. In an attempt to re-envision a practice of sisterhood, bell hooks argues that each woman must “divest of their power to dominate and exploit subordinated groups of women.”¹⁴⁹ The meaning of feminism is verified as a movement toward equality in terms of more identity characteristics than simply gender. Significantly, hooks and other feminists argue that all feminists must be invested in all forms oppression because the patriarchal system expresses power in multiple ways and on different bodies differently. Mohanty drops the language of *sisterhood* to focus on the more active sense of *solidarity*. In step with hooks, she argues that solidarity, at its foundation, requires critical attention to the political and social location in which identities are rooted with an emphasis on history; what she calls “politics of location.”¹⁵⁰ Reflective individuals can shape a responsive and engaged movement which recognizes and celebrates agency where Morgan's sisterhood precludes as possible. The memory of the women's movement will meet present feminist needs best if it embodies and encourages critical engagement with our history, especially within the movement itself.

Feminist Museum Spaces

Spatial design significantly impacts reception. Because space influences museum visitors' comprehension of curated material and thus message, it is important to try to account for the political orientations encouraged. No exhibition design can be without its emphases and deflections which is especially important when displaying the ongoing social movements and their politics.

¹⁴⁹ bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 15–16.

¹⁵⁰ Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*, 122.

Conveying the history of women's movements is a unique attempt to capture a force both dispersed and still in evolution. Feminist subjects must allow for a diversity of interpretations and approaches to respect difference. I translate these feminist goals into museum spaces by first attending to the larger layout. In a comprehensive review of space syntax in museums literature, Jean Wineman and John Peponis argue that the meta ordering and position of layouts as a discourse in terms of visibility and accessibility which "affects exploratory movement, visual contact, and active engagement with exhibit elements."¹⁵¹ Through comparative analysis of multiple traveling exhibits, the researchers measured visitor *contacts* (approaching a display) and *engagements* (consciously encountering a display for reasons other than immediate proximity) to decipher how visual elements (like the clarity of themes) and accessibility (the lack of obstructions either in the line of vision or movement) shape experiences. Their research identifies "'probabilistic' pattern of movement" which exists between the extremities of starkly laid out *spatially dictated movement* and open designs that produce *spatially random movement*.¹⁵² In the middle ground, *spatially guided movement*, audiences have no distinct or disciplined spatial script and are instead presented with multiple routes to choose between. Allowing choice, they argue, helps to "convey a larger idea, one that is more primary and more likely to be received... whose reception will depend to a larger extent on the interests and paths followed by particular visitors."¹⁵³ If the primary goal is to communicate the broader idea of feminist equality, then a wide range of avenues to materially express the idea is best. Clearly

¹⁵¹ Jean D. Wineman and John Peponis, "Constructing Spatial Meaning Spatial Affordances in Museum Design," *Environment and Behavior* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 87.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

though, “the cognitive intelligibility of space” cannot be understood independently of the micro exhibit design.¹⁵⁴

The exploration of directed movement in museum spaces can have significant impact on the perspective visitors are encouraged to take up and the relative degrees of agency that given perspective affords. This is especially important when museum subject matter is intimately related to urgent activist issues. Erik Aoki, Greg Dickinson and Brian Ott argue that the spatial design of the Draper Museum of Natural History fosters an “ahistorical subject position” which “derail[s] critical engagement” with preservationist issues and the fashion in which the museum presents them.¹⁵⁵ They rely on Michel de Certeau’s theorization of place and its function to “solidfy time and history and, thereafter to solidify subjectivity or, put differently, to suture the subject into carefully constructed material narratives that limit agency.”¹⁵⁶ Through their physical encounters with the space, they discover that the museum’s directed movement and simulated backdrops erase time by “de-historizing, naturalizing, and thus de-politicizing the concerns raised within the space.”¹⁵⁷ Visitors move very specifically amongst taxidermy animals and simulated environments to engender a particular “godlike” perspectives of the visitor as *master* over nature, a nature that did not exist prior to its discovery by man. Through the performance of experiencing the space, visitor transcend historical tensions statically portrayed, spatially situated and rhetorically described to allow uncritical, disempowering distance.

With careful attention to spatial layout, curators must also strategically build and deploy collections of objects in such a way that opens possibility rather than foreclosing and sterilizing

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 90.

¹⁵⁵ Eric Aoki, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, “The Master Naturalist Imagined: Directed Movements and Simulations at the Draper Museum of Natural History,” in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 239.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 240.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

history. Thus the visual strategies within spatial layouts matter immensely. A notable endeavor is the National Museum of Australia (NMA) with which Alison Bartlett and Margaret Henderson coupled to enact the Australian Feminist Memory Project. Unabashedly, they designed and collected materials for a feminist exhibit of material artifacts commemorating the Australian women's movement. The status of the NMA as a government apparatus against which much of the Australian women's movement was directed worried the designers who feared "that by constructing a feminist museum collection [they] were positioning the women's movement in the past rather than an ongoing politics."¹⁵⁸ In this sense, the NPS is open to similar criticisms.

Bartlett and Henderson critically reflect on the process of invention by interrogating how to "open up the past to other languages, esthetics and memories" so as not to calcify a movement on the move.¹⁵⁹ The project approaches movement in museums from the perspective of materiality as a powerful and affective "[trigger] for memories" which can "potentially [enable] a continuation of feminist politics."¹⁶⁰ The space of the NMA was meant to be reconfigured as they "[aim] to use the museum to engender pro-feminist perspectives in audiences" in a move "that might cause audiences to rethink their preconceptions of feminist activism."¹⁶¹ As Canzanelli and Vivien similarly express in their personal interviews, Bartlett and Henderson's project required self reflection and respect for the multiplicity of meanings that would eventually be drawn from the exhibit objects. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Ott et al.'s analysis of the Cody Firearms Museum foregrounds the way modes of looking can have significant sterilizing and domesticating affects on the memory of objects. While the museum is only

¹⁵⁸ Alison Bartlett and Margaret Henderson, "The Australian Women's Movement Goes to the Museum: The 'cultures of Australian Feminist Activism, 1970–1990' Project," *Women's Studies International Forum* 37 (March 2013): 90, doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2012.10.013.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 86.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 87.

partially successful in erasing the violent history associated with guns, they argue that success is in large part due to the strategic representation of guns as “inert objects of visual pleasure” through careful control of what is present and what is rendered absence (like the sound of guns firing or visual evidence of war.)¹⁶² The museum is exemplar of the ways in which presence is strategically sterile and “absence is not without meaning; rather, it is a fully embodied rhetorical experience” which “nearly always serves hegemony.”¹⁶³ While the NMA encourages connections with openly political context, the Cody Firearms Museum renders the political invisible except to one who must look awry (as Ott et al. use Slavoj Žižek’s psychoanalytic mode of looking.) To see one’s identity in political terms turns critical attention to those politics.

To welcome multiple readings, the collection welcomed controversial objects in themselves and allowed for contradictions to exist between different artifacts. The power suits of “femocrats” who operated successfully amid the rich business world are equal in value to screen-printed tea towels and other materials that signify diverging activist politics. While the exhibit does not appear to ever have been on display, a stress was placed on object biography as an illuminating pedagogical tool which explains “questions of mode of production, materials, purpose of item (and its change over time), and the identities of the producer and end user” to “enabl[e] a feminist way of being in the world.”¹⁶⁴ Audiences are empowered to formulate the particular feminist being by forming their own connections between objects and their own histories.

The WRNHP owns few artifacts and displays even less, instead centering the ocular engagement of the Visitor Center on statues, reproductions of photographs and docu-drama videos. The visual strategies of the Visitor Center are significantly different from the material-

¹⁶² Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson, “Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns,” 217.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Bartlett and Henderson, ““The Australian Women’s Movement Goes to the Museum,” 90.

centered approach supported by the NMA against which a productive set of dissimilarities can explain the tenor of politics in the current design. Additionally, the feminist exhibit was designed but does not seem to have been installed as of yet. However, Bartlett and Henderson's research highlights objects with detailed biographies in stark contrast to the park's floating images with minimal labeling. Unlike in the NMA feminist exhibit, the WRNHP removes these images from their historical context to instead place them in universalizing conversation with other images.

The emerging feminist approaches to museums rely on personal elements to demonstrate the "personal is political" mantra. Museum expert Viv Golding theorizes feminist museum spaces through affect theory and postcolonial concepts of creolisation and relation. In terms of the affective experience, she argues that "feminists might positively view the museum as a public and private space that is at once physical and sensual: a site where bodies come into contact with objects and others."¹⁶⁵ Vital connections are made first through "patterns of affect" which promote the critical cultural interconnectedness of creolisation and "'third space' of unsettledness" relation. Here the main objective is pedagogical. Voices lost in history or tokenized when placed within the colonial context of museum spaces may be heard if space is appropriately made. Golding favors museum trails through exhibits which are pluralist and allow for multiple stories. Ideally, trails create what Edward Said theorizes as musical *polyphony* where "essential interrelationship—interplay—is emphasized."¹⁶⁶ While the WRNHP does not feature trails, I mean to highlight feminist attention to museum space which welcomes multiplicity and a critical engagement with history.

¹⁶⁵ Viv Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," *Feminist Review* 104, no. 1 (July 1, 2013): 83, doi:10.1057/fr.2013.2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

Circulating Connections to Contemporary Movements

The park, as a memory site, fosters historical and political connections evident by the circulating discourse at the onset of the park. In this section, I overview the park's political significance to establish that it is steeped in contemporary politics even before fully opening to the public. Politicians, activists and historians charge the park with the task of awakening the sleepy youth, an apathetic army of young women who simply do not know what they have, how hard foremothers fought for it and how easily it could all be lost. The park was a political resource and byproduct well before the Visitor Center opened and continues to be today.

Prior to the park's opening in July of 1982¹⁶⁷ and Visitor Center's opening in 1993, public sentiments regarding the park underline the establishment's powerful potential to inspire change and revive the activism of Stanton and her cohorts of suffragists and abolitionists. Politicians and historians understand the park's unique role to account for the original convention, its context and immediate cultural context while also connecting the core concepts of the convention to the ongoing women's rights movement. Nancy Dubner, a high-ranking New York State government official who served in multiple capacities, was an influential advocate for the increased inclusion of women's historic sites in the NPS beginning with Eleanor Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park and later the creation of the WRNHP. Her moving address at the Organization of American Historians Conference in April of 1982 highlights the obstacles to establishing the park in light of resources and "the [local] power structure of Seneca Falls... concerned about the town's image" in light of the feminist movement's "bad publicity." However, she argues that there was in important overlap between women's issues and women's history. She states, "the modern feminist movement was, in fact, responsible for the creation of the park. The movement was

¹⁶⁷ The Wesleyan Chapel, M'Clintock House and the municipal building which would become the Visitor Center and park office space were not secured by the park until 1985. As a result, the majority of sources claim the park opened in 1985, however, I refer to the Administrative History's marker.

happening. Support for substantive women's issues and support for the park came from many of these same legislative leaders."¹⁶⁸ Those pushing for more thorough equality saw the potential park as an ally in that fight.

As numerous political voices echo in the years following the park's opening and design implementation, Dubner bemoans an apathetic youth and conveys a judgment about the state of women through the Anthony's spectacles and Stanton's pen. Anxiety regarding the unrealized power of women's memory sites and thus the threat of leaving only a superficial mark in tomorrow's history books, she grounds the future of the movement at least partially in Seneca Falls:

It is sad, no infuriating that so many of the 18 sentiments in the Document still need to be enacted into law and integrated into American life after 134 years. It must be disturbing to Stanton and Anthony... If we slip backward, will historians of the future look at the Twentieth Century revival of the women's movement... as a "flash in the pan"? A pimple on the nose of mankind? Will it be a movement that never got its act together? Will it be allowed to die by the 51.8% of the population it purported to speak for and whose condition it sought to improve? *The Women's Rights National Historical Park can help keep the spirit for women's equality alive.* By telling and retelling these important chapters in American history, perhaps one day we will have both equal legal rights for all our citizens, and many more historical sites and artifacts, plus a throng of leaders whose achievements will reflect the strength and abilities of America's women.¹⁶⁹

Whatever the reason for the degree of indifference among young women, Dubner, like many, trusts the park and its inspiring memory to help feed the spark of activism, to beget more Stanton and Anthonys.

And, Dubner is not alone. Many have tapped into the Convention's memory for political momentum. Historian Polly Welts Kaufman describes the launch of the National Women's

¹⁶⁸ Nancy Dubner, "'The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention: The People and Their World' at the Organization of American Historians Conference (1982)," in *'All Men and Women Are Created Equal': An Administrative History of Women's Rights National Historical Park*, by Rebecca Conard (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2012), 343.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 343–344. Emphasis mine.

Party's Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 which was staged in Seneca Falls on the convention's seventy-fifth anniversary.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, other convention anniversaries were marked with fanfare and politically charged speeches. Much later, the anti-nuclear lesbian feminists established a commune called the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice in nearby Romulus, NY near the site of a purported nuclear weapons storage facility, the Seneca Army Depot. The commune thrived in the summer of 1983 and grated especially hard on the nerves of conservative Seneca County citizens when the encampment held "die-in" protests. Encampment literature and marches frequently referenced Seneca Fall's central role in the history of feminist activism. Members laid claim to the 1848 legacy as part of the justificatory narrative for the encampment's physical and ideological opposition to the Seneca Army Depot and patriarchy in all of its forms.¹⁷¹ More recently, President Barack Obama highlighted Seneca Falls' historical significance in his 2013 inaugural address: "We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths—that all of us are created equal—is the star that guides us still, just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall..."¹⁷² A wide range of activists and politicians connect Seneca Falls with contemporary politics.

However, not every early account agrees that the primary drive to establish the park was overtly political. The park's recently published Administrative History states, "Three visions converged to create the Women's Rights National Historical Park: one aimed at increasing the representation of women and women's history in the National Park Service/System, one at reviving a downtown business district, and one at saving a community from destroying its

¹⁷⁰ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History*, 222.

¹⁷¹ Louise Krasniewicz, *Nuclear Summer: The Clash of Communities at the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1992).

¹⁷² Barack Obama, "Pres. Obama Inaugural Address" (Washington, D.C., United States, January 21, 2013), <http://www.c-span.org/Events/Pres-Obama-Inaugural-Address/10737437409/>.

history.”¹⁷³ As preservation politics are steeped in political investments, Rebecca Conard, author and compiler of the park’s Administrative History, acknowledges that the above interests were “driven by second-wave feminism and scholarly interest in women’s history” among numerous other contexts. Although, she stops short of connecting the political activism with preservation as she says “coincidentally, while the United States was taking strides at the federal level to redress gender inequality, historic preservation also became a national issue.”¹⁷⁴ However, Polly Welts Kaufman’s insightful volume regarding women in the NPS both as rangers and as subjects of preservation demonstrates the strong influence Dubner celebrates.

Indeed, political connections are drawn by visitors to the park as well. Internal park resources reference park visitors’ tendency to locate the consequences of the Convention in terms of their personal experiences. While funds for and the design of exhibits were still in development, seasonal ranger Michael West authored an untitled (and unfortunately under-contextualized) document which remarks upon early park visitors’ experiences. He highlights that a number of visitors anticipate “a very emotional experience” and understand the park in terms of their lived experiences. I quote the document at length because of its relatively inaccessible nature in the park archives:

The most important aspect of their understanding is that they see sexism to be on a continuum; that is, they perceive the inequality of women to be an ongoing phenomenon with roots in ancient history. To them, Seneca Falls, the Stanton house, and, especially, the Wesleyan Chapel are places which all modern people struggling for equal rights for women should make pilgrimages. The Wesleyan Chapel is their Mecca because [sic] they view the 1848 Convention as a benchmark in the struggle against sexual injustice. Moreover, they link 1848 with their own experience and reaction to sexism, with more modern activism against sexism, and, also, with other contemporary movement that women have taken the lead in—especially the anti-nuclear war movement. Visitors make

¹⁷³ Conard, “‘All Men and Women Are Created Equal’: An Administrative History of Women’s Rights National Historical Park,” 11.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

these connections on their own, in their questions and, oftentimes, [sic] in their very personal statement... Their statements are in accord with their feeling that Stanton and others—for what they said and what they did—are spiritual foremothers, touchstones for the activism of the more modern movement...

Without having an absolute and definitive understanding of modern feminist theory, the interpreter is able to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the more modern women's movement. Thus by understanding with the visitor that the 1848 Convention gave voice to women thereby contributing to their ongoing empowerment, we are able to keep a finger on the pulse of the women's movement, even the more contemporary aspects of it, without being caught up in the stream of contemporary theory.¹⁷⁵

Although it is unclear what West means by “the stream of contemporary theory” and how “being caught up” would influence interpretation, he bases his observations on the visitors themselves.

In a sense, West is an internal voice speaking on behalf of those on the outside for whom the park should be acutely aware of as it develops. He continually emphasizes that visitors are not primed by tour guides but organically approach the memory sites making these important connections themselves. Fear of apathetic youth who risk losing what was so hard fought for by the likes of Stanton, Anthony and Douglass permeate historians' remarks, activists' chants and politicians' pleas. Hillary Rodham Clinton, as first lady, delivered the 1998 keynote address of the Convention's 150th anniversary in Seneca Falls. To wild applause from her audience of thousands,¹⁷⁶ she announced, “One hundred and fifty years ago, the women at Seneca Falls were silenced by someone else. Today, women, we silence ourselves. We have a choice. We have a voice. And if we are going to finish the work begun here we must exercise our right to vote in

¹⁷⁵ Michael West, “Untitled” (National Park Service, Summer 1984), Women's Rights National Historical Park; 7, Park Visitation and Perceptions (Internal Sources), Women's Rights National Historical Park.

¹⁷⁶ Ben Dobbin, “Back To Seneca Falls, After Coming A Long Way -- 150-Year Fight For Women's Rights Celebrated,” *The Seattle Times*, July 15, 1998, sec. Business, <http://community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=19980715&slug=2761351>.

every election we are eligible to vote in.”¹⁷⁷ From around and within the park’s maturing structure, we find a will to read the contemporary women’s rights movement as an extension of the politics ostensibly first housed in the Chapel. Clearly, the park’s early supporters and visitors fashioned a political tool by contextualizing the memory of the Convention in the lineage of women’s rights not yet fully realized.

The park materially contemporizes history and echoes a particular political memory work throughout the Visitor Center exhibit design. The park’s superintendent from 1989 to 1995, Linda Canzanelli, is almost unparalleled in her degree of influence over the park’s exhibit design, especially the Visitor Center which was designed, installed and opened during her tenure. She demonstrated an acute literacy of memory politics in her insistence to foster the park as primarily a site of provocative and relevant ideas. In recent interviews, Canzanelli explained that her vision for the park centered on the concept of equality rather than the materiality of the historic event.¹⁷⁸ The event was an appropriate vehicle but would mean little to today’s audience if it were not couched in struggles they would find familiar. Next, I turn to an examination of the Visitor Center’s exhibit design and the ways in which the women’s rights movement is presented as inclusive of contemporary issues.

Analysis: Reading the Women’s Rights National Historical Park

I first read the Visitor Center by analyzing the larger spatial context within which the exhibits are encountered. Second, I explain the visual strategies of the second floor which promote universal sisterhood rather than a feminism of solidarity. My experiences in the space as a participant observer inform my reading of the material memory work. However, some exhibit

¹⁷⁷ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *First Women’s Rights Convention Anniversary*, 1998, <http://c-spanvideo.org/program/FirstW>.

¹⁷⁸ Conard and Smith, “Linda Canzenelli,” 14.

attributes were explained or pointed out to me by park staff. Rangers were willing to share their experiences and insights which has enriched my analysis.

This section examines the Visitor Center as a museum layout though it is technically a National Park site, because the spatial experience is significantly different for visitors in at least two ways. First, the space has no authentic connection to the historic event. The building was originally constructed in 1915¹⁷⁹ as a car dealership and was acquired by the city as a Village Hall in 1927. It transferred hands to the NPS in 1987 just as the Wesleyan Chapel redesign competition was getting underway.¹⁸⁰ While the building is an historic site for its role in the hamlet's development, programming utilizes the space as a way to contextualize the Chapel (visible from a window in the Visitor Center), historic homes and address the aftermath of the Convention.

The second uniqueness resides in the degree that movement is guided. During the Stanton's home tours, the largely void space necessitates the ranger's narrative work. Authenticity is a primary concern both of the rangers, as evidenced in the time invested in authenticating material during the tour, and of visitors, who often ask clarifying questions to gauge genuineness of the material. Visitors follow the rangers from room to room and wander little on their own. A similar experience is true in the Chapel though it is a one-room space. In the Visitor Center, Wineman and Peponis' concept of *spatially guided movement* matches the material experience. Movement through the exhibits has an initial degree of directedness through exhibits which are meant to contextualize the 1848 event and people. Past these elements, a movement is only partially directed and visitors are free to examine exhibits about labor prior to wandering to exhibits about fashion or visa versa. It is also a relatively individualistic experience

¹⁷⁹ According to the Friends of the Women's Rights National Historical Park, the building was erected in 1916.

¹⁸⁰ Conard, "'All Men and Women Are Created Equal': An Administrative History of Women's Rights National Historical Park," 105.

which relies on no one else and does not call attention to one's fellow visitors. Children can wander independently of parents and students of rangers. Typically, Rangers remain at the information desk and may only periodically make themselves available on the second floor for those who have questions. As a result, the spatial and visual design of the exhibits accomplishes a majority of the memory work.

A First Impression of Connections

The Visitor Center is the visitor's first (and for some the only) point of reference. As of March 2014, the park website's FAQ page suggests visitors allot one hour to view the park's dramatized orientation film and explore the exhibits. The information desk is directly in front of the main doors and is always attended by either a ranger or park volunteer. The exhibit section to the extreme left upon entering has often been empty, in transition or tried to orientate visitors to the area through maps. To the extreme right is the bookshop area which many wander before and after their visit. Park rangers stationed at the information desk are well-versed in the Convention's historical context. Frequently, rangers and volunteers alike engage with visitors about their interests and work to match those interests with upcoming events on the daily tour and monthly calendar or nearby historic sites.

It is not surprising that visitors usually engage with those at the information desk both upon entering and before leaving, especially if they are purchasing any souvenirs or materials from the bookstore. Superintendent Canzenelli specifically wanted the Visitor Center visitors to be unable to even use the restroom without first needing to pass close enough to make contact with someone at the desk.¹⁸¹ The first encounter is crucial as it frames much of one's experience throughout the exhibits. For example, frequently adult male visitors are visibly uncomfortable upon entering through the Visitor Center doors and the small talk at the front desk can lessen that

¹⁸¹ Conard and Smith, "Linda Canzenelli," 4.

uneasiness. Rangers are acutely aware of the phenomenon and attest to their own unique strategies to engage the husband, father, or friend who has been “dragged” by his female associates.¹⁸² Because the first floor is so well attended, my following reading of the immediately adjacent space is informed by the park’s interpretive intention. Materially reading a space will seldom take into account intention, however, the individual at the information kiosk is ready and waiting to provide a great amount of detail about the nearby statues.



Figure 2.1 The Information Desk roughly as visitors would enter (courtesy of park website Women’s Rights NHP Visitor Center photo gallery, “Rangers at the Information Desk”)

Beyond the information desk, the material of the Visitor Center immediately begins to put memory to work by contemporizing the Convention attendees. At the center of the first

¹⁸² Every ranger I talked with regarding visitor reactions mentioned the uncomfortable adult male and understood including him as part of their task. The Administrative History also mentions this sense.

floor's layout is a nearly life-size set of bronze statues designed by Lloyd Lillie called the "First Wave." The entirely unlabeled statue set depicts twenty convention attendees, most in mid-engagement with each other as a community in motion. Former superintendent Canzanelli worked closely with Lillie and park historian Vivien Rose to design a visual referent for the dissemination of the attendees' goals through space and time.¹⁸³ Eleven statues are anonymous in that they represent those who attended but were not signatories to the Declaration of Sentiments. The nine others portray the mainstay five organizers with their husbands (excepting Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Martha Wright) and Frederick Douglass. The dynamic positions illustrate actors in a diversity of activities directed in multiple directions; the wave moves out from the center and into contemporary life through unique characters. Some are mid-sentence while others lean in toward a neighbor or possess earnest eyes peering out. Visitors can place themselves amidst the ranks and are, in fact, encouraged to do so when rangers are prompted for the figures' identities. Park guests move between the statues, study their features and wonder at what such resolute eyes might be set on. Elizabeth Cady Stanton seems to be in mid-step with Frederick Douglass close at her elbow and both look toward the same horizon. It is with these two figures most photos are taken which may speak to the relatively stronger affective influence or tourist draw the recognizable have over the anonymous.

However, the anonymous figures function as a subtext into which visitors are encouraged to insert their own politics and compare goals. The central question posed materially and through park staff is "would you sign the declaration?" Both Hillary Rodham Clinton as First Lady (for the 1998 150th anniversary of the convention) and President Barack Obama (in 2013 to mark Women's Equality Day) similarly harkened "who of us?" Each politician connected the concepts of voting to the modern woman's fight for equality not simply because the original goals have

¹⁸³ Conard and Smith, "Linda Canzenelli," 5.

yet to be fully realized but also because the call for equality has evolved to include other realms not specifically spelled out in the original Declaration of Sentiments.¹⁸⁴

Spatially Guided Movement Up the Stairs

Once the specific roots of the Convention are recalled and, at least in part, made personal, the back half of the first floor opens to cast across time, space and subject. Behind the statues, the space opens to allow visitors choice: the bathrooms are on the immediate left, the Guntzel Theater is ahead and to the left (which houses the docu-drama orientation film *Dreams of Equality*), a new display against the back white wall. The display features President Barack Obama's 2013 gift of a signed copy of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 alongside photos and his guestbook signature, and along the entire wall on the right-hand side and up the stairs is the east photo wall. While the restrooms were thoughtfully designed to be accessible and equipped for moms *and dads* with infants, it does not have as significant an impact on the park's memory work and my analysis focuses elsewhere.

Visitors are encouraged to first watch the orientation film which chronicles the life of a female character as she, in a seemingly unbiased and curious manner, witnesses the Convention and the events that follow. We learn of her experience through the narrated letters sent between her and her family members until 1860. Near the end of the film, the character is markedly happy with women's political and social gains but also aware of and uncertain of future changes. This is evident in the reported discussions she shares with her granddaughter about developments in fashion where there is neither rebuke nor complete agreement. Historical difference is present and the documentary ultimately succeeds in establishing the convention's influence with ears perked hopefully for future (post-1860) developments. While the docu-drama has circulated

¹⁸⁴ For example, First Lady Clinton highlights gun control, affordable childcare and superficial media messaging. One enters the Visitor Center with the roots of the First Wave at hand and are encouraged to count themselves among the brave and heroic.

through other NPS sites¹⁸⁵ and it is well-established that documentaries about and in the NPS¹⁸⁶ and regarding social movements¹⁸⁷ do considerable memory work, my analysis focuses on the visual strategies in the spatial layout outside the theater. With some historical context provided, what memory of the women's movement is visually pronounced for visitors? In my experience, visitors spend more time perusing the exhibits than viewing the film, if they even do. The exhibits require considerably more visitor involvement, too, because the format is under-explained and thus markedly different from the rest of the park's programming (like the tours which rely on heavy contextual explanation and artifact authenticity, as explained in the third chapter.)

I turn now to the diverse collection of large images from floor to ceiling of the east wall. Covered in an array of photographs, cartoons, and artifacts that are neither categorized nor explicitly explained, it is easy for visitors to not really know what purpose the exhibit serves. This area has several floating quotes presumably authored by those photographed or otherwise discussing related issues. Beyond these quote blocks, there is no further context. Visitors must rely on the possible date printed near the bottom corner of the photograph or the visual clues to tell the story. As Ott et al. explain, absence will serve hegemony. Thus to read for identity markers likely means visitors are relying on stereotypes about what an indigenous, latina, black or asian woman of a certain timeframe would look like.

¹⁸⁵ For example, a quick Google search shows the Steamtown National Historical Site showed the film in March of 2011 and the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial showed the film in March of 2014.

¹⁸⁶ Adrian Ivakhiv, "Nature's Nation: Improvisation, Democracy, and Ken Burns' National Parks," *Environmental Communication* 4, no. 4 (December 2010): 462–68; Teresa Bergman, "Can Patriotism Be Carved in Stone? A Critical Analysis of Mt. Rushmore's Orientation Films," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 89–112; Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism*.

¹⁸⁷ Charles J. G. Griffin, "Movement as Memory: Significant Form in *Eyes on the Prize*," *Communication Studies* 54, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 196; Bonnie J. Dow, "Fixing Feminism: Women's Liberation and the Rhetoric of Television Documentary," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 1 (February 2004): 53–80.



Figure 2.2 Images at the north end of the Visitor Center along the east photo wall and before the stairs to the second floor (photograph by the author, 2014)

Kaufman describes the display as “multicultural”¹⁸⁸ and Canzanelli calls it the “agony/ecstasy wall.”¹⁸⁹ Rangers have no definite reading and are not trained to “make sense” of the wall for visitors to instead allow individuals the time and space to think through what they wish to toward their own conclusion.

The images are not ordered nor is there any audio tour or handout to contextualizes the lives in array and how they relate to each other. In the above photograph, the images are jumbled

¹⁸⁸ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History*, 222.

¹⁸⁹ Conard and Smith, “Linda Canzenelli.”

and sometimes on top of each other. Visually, we can draw out connections and tensions like the textile worker (top), the children playing (bottom) and college graduate (left.) The protestor speaks for herself through her sign and possibly the floating quote near her middle which reads, “‘If men start with the idea that woman is an inferior being...they will write history in accordance with such views, and, whatever may be the facts, they will be interpreted to suit them.’ Caroline Dall, Massachusetts, 1858.” This apt point echoes the characterization rangers provide of early suffragist writers like Stanton, Anthony and Amelia Bloom. However, there is no further explanation about this protestor’s political location. Spatially speaking, she floats near, over and amidst women across time, age and identity. Below is a rare moment of visual context (an image from the park’s facebook page with the artist’s mother pictured.) The artist (middle) is shown working in the style of the art (left) amidst black female iron workers (top right) and the non-descript indigenous people (right). The floating quote is one featured in history books:

‘You see we have power. Men have to dream to get power from the spirits and they think of everything they can—song and speeches and marching around, hoping that the spirits will notice them and give them some power. But we have power... can any warrior make a child, no matter how brave and wonderful he is?’ Marie Chona, Papago Woman, 1930s.

Again the enthymematic connection between the quote and the image is supplied spatially.

Creative connections between these floating images seem welcomed.



Figure 2.3 Additional images along the north end of the east photo wall (courtesy of the Women's Rights National Historical Park Facebook page)

Interestingly, as one follows the wall past the images I have provided above, there is a window that frames the Wesleyan Chapel. An information plaque on the window sill describes the Wesleyan Chapel which describes the role the chapel has served as a site of political activity after the 1848 convention including commemoration celebrations, Alice Paul's announcement of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 and a National Organization for Women meeting in 1988. The chapel floats as an image but is grounded in significant history.

Visitors walk along the wall and up the stairs slowly to take in the diversity of images along the way. Order does not emerge. The collage depicts a diversity of women in a variety of modes. Some images may be an affront to particular political sensibilities such as the “Black Lesbian Feminist” photograph of Gwenn Craig which I analyze in the last chapter. Other images include several women at what appears to be a firing range and an editorial cartoon depicting a woman and man in conversation with the commentary, “We’re having a communication problem”:



Figure 2.4 Cartoon on the east photo wall near the top of the stairs (photograph by author, 2014)

Other images are seemingly benign. Multiple pieces of handicraft are enclosed in plastic and several photographs resemble family portraits, one quite formal and others casual snapshots.

Once on the second floor, the visitor is left to the spatial and visual designs. The Information desk is too far for reference questions and one is no longer under the gaze of the

ranger on duty. Visitors tend to halt at the top of the stairs to take time and read the space for spatial guidance. The entrance to the exhibits is not formally marked though it is the first available means to enter into the space that is gradually becomes visible as one ascends the stairs. The entrance is labeled and pictures on the park website:



Figure 2.5 The first exhibits on the second floor (photograph by the author, 2014)

The first two exhibits (the first called “Inauguration of Rebellion” and the second “True Womanhood”) are nearly unavoidable as my first in the sequence. They share spatial and topical space regarding the political and social context of the Convention, its details and immediate aftermath. The exhibit design in this first section is text-heavy and focused on historical accuracy. Layers of textual information and historical photographs are folded neatly and pose an exhibit that a rare visitor will exhaust. Above three sets of layers are depicted: the small display booklet (bottom right), the larger booklet (middle right) and the pillar (center). Each plays a part

in contextualizing the actors and their times. The first panel of the “Inauguration of Rebellion” exhibit, “America in 1848,” explains the influence of Upstate New York’s religious fervor, also known as the “burned over district,” which largely drew women then encouraged to “follow the dictates of their own conscious.” As a result, women “reshaped the public arena” by “mov[ing] beyond the home to attend and sometimes address public meetings urging the abolition of slavery, prison reform, temperance, and public education.” Visitors can opt in to learn more about the web of key players in the temperance and abolitionist movements who set the stage for the convention. The middle right larger booklet, for example, is a set of laminated copies of primary documentation (photographs of Sojourner Truth, William Lloyd Garrison, slave auction postings) accompanied by contextual information. The smaller booklet is a model of an historical grammar book where each letter correlates with an important element of 1848 history. This exhibit space feels like walking into a secondary school history book where bright images loom large, surrounded by explanation and ordered clearly.

To the left of this exhibit space is the nook devoted explaining “true womanhood” in the 1848 context. A series of historical photographs, paintings, editorial cartoons and artifacts suggest strict gender roles. The text is less dense here, defining “The True Woman” in terms that clearly denote a free woman and ignore racial dimensions to gender. The only dependent variable is that “her position depended on her husband’s wage-earning ability and on her ability to bear and rear children and manage her home.” Visitors will step up to the glass encasement of artifacts like books pertaining to womanhood and items that denote motherhood and domestic labor.



Figure 2.6 The “True Reality” exhibit on the second floor (photograph by author, 2014)

A second plaque better recognizes difference. “True Reality,” with numerous historical photographs, explains that women were perceived through the “cult of true womanhood” as possessing a moral authority which many women cherished. However, “this ideal ignored reality: infant mortality, poverty, slavery, widowhood, differing cultural customs.” To continue on from the two exhibits, one must pass a nearly life-sized terracotta statue of Sojourner Truth who stands over two telephone receivers and a brief description. The recording offers short bits from numerous characters who are discussing (in possibly epistolary form) the difficulties of being a woman in the mid 1800s, including Truth herself. Truth’s resounding question “Ain’t I a woman?” stands beside her “sisters” who share of poverty, dangerous childbirth and marital

rape. These two exhibits offer greater detail than the orientation film and the tours though few will explore it all. The visitor garners an impression of women on the move with plenty of specific strictures and hardships to move against.

The connecting memory work accomplished by the Lloyd Lillie sculptures on the first floor is reinforced in these two exhibits. If the photograph collage along the stairs is disorienting then these exhibits provide historical grounding in authoritative—like a history book—manner. The civic heroines of the convention have been explained and many may argue that these exhibits, on their own, fulfill the park's duty to the American public. I explore this possibility in the last chapter. I now turn to the remaining elements of the second floor to explore the contemporizing efforts and the feminist politics they suggest.

Immediately following, the “spine” of the second floor exhibit emerges as a series of eight text-laden pillars. Each pillar represents a space of years in a timeline format that begins just before the convention and ends abruptly in 1993 where the last pillar stands empty. Important legislation and events are marked ranging from the Convention to the Civil Rights movement to Title XI legislation.



Figure 2.7 The timeline on the second floor (courtesy of park website Women's Rights NHP Visitor Center photo gallery, "Exhibit of a timeline of women's history events")

Visitors, from this central length of the second floor, can wander into any four exhibit spaces. From backward left all the way to the right: "School Matters," "Campaigning Women," "Fashioning an Image," and "Women at Work." Between the last two exhibits, a large yellow sign is installed on the dark back wall which reads "What will it be like when men and women are truly equal?" Here visitors can use exam pencils to write out their responses on note cards and prop them up amidst others responses. It is towards this back wall that the timeline "spine" guides visitors toward. The question, thus, looms in our minds as we engage with the surrounding contemporary exhibits.

The least accessible is the exhibit dedicated to "School Matters" and equality in education. One has to turn away from the timeline pillars and move in a seemingly backward motion. Visitors tend to explore this exhibit last and spend less time doing so. The remaining three exhibits are more visually engaging and are located "ahead." The largest amount of space is

dedicated to the “Women at Work” exhibit which occupies the far right corner of the second floor. Much of this exhibit is visible from the top of the stairs, however, the visual and 3-D graphic representations of women’s standing in particular areas of employment are clearly dated in the early 1990s. While recent legislative debates have centered on closing the gendered pay gap, the exhibit is relatively archaic in appearance thus does not foster affective outrage. The data is more than 20 years old and thus easy to dismiss.

Artifacts, photographs, and interactive attributes of the exhibit encourage visitors to *picture* women’s work beyond the cultural stereotypes of seamstress, teacher and the like. Children can peer through circular cutouts into a compartmented, mirrored section which reflects them in career attire. Depending on the cutout, a child (or adult who has stooped down to peer through) may see their face as attached to an artist, surgeon, park ranger, president, computer operator or carpenter. Stereotypes are further challenged by a photo collage exploring “What is Women’s Work?” A large collage of square, evenly sized photos depict various women working in diverse contexts. While the gendered pay gap and career stereotypes pose barriers for women in the workforce, the exhibit showcases multiple women who have succeeded nonetheless. A large booklet of laminated photos and short bios is available below the collage and features women like Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, tennis star Billie Jean King, and lawyer Eleanor Holmes Norton. The only controversial aspect of the exhibit may be on the rear side where, as one walks around the installation, a small computer installation invites you to weigh in on a recorded debate regarding female sports reporters in male locker rooms. The staged debate between a female reporter and her male boss challenges visitors to take a stance by “voting” through the buttons. Whichever side the visitor agrees with, the opposite party will return with a comeback which establishes an ongoing nature to the debate and relative objectivity of the park

itself. Several of these computer stations are installed throughout the second floor though many are not functioning or are not engaged with possibly because of their archaic appearance.

However, the rhetorical function is the same: introduce two sides of a contemporary debate and invite the public to offer their own judgments. No correct or “official” answer is overtly expressed.

The majority of my examples come from the two remaining exhibits: “Campaigning Women” and “Fashioning an Image” for several reasons. First, the “School Matters” exhibit is less accessible than the remaining three which Wineman and Peponis cite as an important factor in spatial guidance. The larger message is relayed best when space underscores the connections. Second, the “Women at Work” exhibit offers unique representations about women’s public lives as workers but is at a disadvantage due to its relatively static representations of data. Finally, the middle two exhibits are better examples of the specific visual strategies and their political implications. Proximity to the timeline and colorful collages also draw visitors into these installations with less written context than “Women at Work.” I spent more time making sense of these exhibits.

As Wineman and Peponis discuss, the spatial openness is semi-scripted in that certain exhibits are designed with precedent encounters in mind. Before learning about the gendered differences in the modern workforce, visitors are to first root their conceptions of women’s advancement in the Seneca Falls Convention. However, the “Women at Work” exhibit is not necessarily the “next step” in the experience. Exhibits are ordered by topic and one walks a circle around the installment to engage with the entirety. We are, thus, encouraged by our interest in the theme of fashion and for that reason walk around the display. This is not, however, how most visitors experience the space. I am drawn, for example, to the colorful photographs and

zigzagged considerably. Numerous visitors express “there is a lot going on here” and walk from exhibit to alternative exhibit without finishing the cycle.¹⁹⁰ Retention of the larger idea—that each theme is separate and is intimately connected to the Convention—is not communicated as effectively as it could be.

Omissions in the “spine” timeline at the center of the room first piqued my interest. I came to the park looking for representations of particularly important events of fissure in the feminist movement. While legislative or otherwise celebrated successes are important to document and convey to visitors, I felt an intense discomfort with how little was explained about the movement’s painful but vital growth spurts. For example, the timeline highlights the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* but says nothing of bell hooks’ *Aint I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, the *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings of Radical Women of Color* anthology, or Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. The dissent within the feminist movement is an imperative part of what makes the movement *moving*. My unease seems similar to the affective unease felt by Ott et al. in the Cody Firearms Museum,¹⁹¹ I critically analyze the museum for its absences. The question was, how could an exhibit space with so much contextualizing history and relatively visually dynamic representations engender such an underwhelming feeling of incompleteness? I sought out the depictions of women of color, queer bodies, and spiritual figures only to find them amidst the collages, in a sea of other faces. Next, I analyze the visual strategies that show the movement’s difference without showing engaged difference.

Visual Strategies

Given the larger spatial context, I now turn to the visual strategies which several exhibits share in common. Visitors are likely to feel under-guided among the text-driven second floor

¹⁹⁰ Personal conversations with visitors, 2013 and 2014.

¹⁹¹ Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson, “Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns.”

exhibits. As museum trends transition to more immersive, ocular centered, image-driven expression of information, upcoming renovations in the Visitor Center will revise the current text-to-image ratio in favor of more accessible exhibits.¹⁹² There are too many exhibit areas to cover here so I turn now to three specific tactics regarding the photograph collages which meld women's experiences together and articulate a universal sisterhood perspective. The central collage is the east photo wall which climbs the stairs. Two other important collections of photographs do considerable memory work in the "Campaigning Women" and "Fashioning an Image" exhibits as these are focal points of the displays and present provocative possibilities.

The first strategy seen across the photo collages is the lack of specific framing. Photographs, political cartoons and even some artifacts have no labels with only two exceptions: first, most have a year printed the corner of the image (some even indicate the archive from which the image was sources) and second, a handful of anonymous quotes hover in plaques that do not always indicate to whom the quote should be attributed. Whereas the NMA feminist museum exhibit strives to explain the Australian women's rights movement through objects and their specific contexts, the park presents images with no specific background information. A "Campaigning Women" photograph is legible only insofar as I am able to read the protest signs and other clues. In the below image, there is little background information about the (mostly) women. We know little about who they are, what outraged them, which strategies they employed or how they measured the success of their own protests. Instead, protestors ostensibly with issues connected to the Convention are pictured. In the bottom middle photograph, dated 1866, the women are not recognizably protestors but visitors have no context from which they can learn about that specific moment in time. It simply was worth commemorating.

¹⁹² Personal conversation with Chief of Interpretation Kim Szewczyk, an NPS veteran and recent transfer to the park for exactly this purpose.



Figure 2.8 The bottom left portion of the “Campaigning Women” exhibit on the second floor (photograph by author, 2014)

As Mohanty might lead us to ask, where is the history? If solidarity is a process that requires individuals to attend to the difference, then how is the practice of solidarity pictured? Protestors are without history, largely anonymous. The above ERA image is potentially provocative in its ability to instigate conversation about insiders and outsiders of the women’s movement. It is undoubtedly a difficult and pressing question which a brief label may have more easily prompted. As the photograph exists in the larger display, it is one of many. As a whole, the display conveys a broad range of campaigning women but does not encourage a working through history. Rather we transcend. The collage provides an impression of women campaigning. Depicted is the female body with something to say. Effective feminist pedagogy would turn a reflective lens back on the visitor about his/her own “politics of location.” Much of the clash among feminists drew lines in and around what was the “feminine experience” to the point

where women of color were erased or tokenized. In this instance, how can the image of the bottom right protestor, wearing a “No More Hiroshimas” bandana, help us understand the complex politics of war. As white World War II era women celebrated their increased participation in the workforce, Japanese-American women feared or were interned and Japanese women suffered atomic bomb radiation. The anonymous quote below the image states “... the most anxious, most eager, most active, most quick to understand the problem and quick to move are woman.” How can women understand problems they transcend? Tracing the contradictions and fissures of the movement help illumine the problems and put visitors in a better position to engage (solidarity).



Figure 2.9 The “Campaigning Women” exhibit on the second floor (photograph by author, 2014)

The second strategy melds women into a universal sisterhood through inauthentic color manipulation of photographs. What history may be gathered from the relative technological telltales of color quality is altered to nominate a *timelessness*. Distinctions in photograph colorization is a frequent means to date images. The purposeful image editing, often with unrealistic blue, red, green and magenta tinting, removes part, if not all, distinction on which we would otherwise rely. Protests (and thus women in them) are visually conflated and confused with each other. In some cases the editing seems to deliberately confuse our sense of time. For example, more recent images are presented with an aged lens beside photographs with entirely synthetic colored filters. In the below example, a 1960 photograph seems unaltered in proximity to the 1974 and 1946 obviously altered images. Authentic representation is set aside to visually argue that time is no object. Neither have the protest buttons been arranged with dates to contextualize their role in protest.



Figure 2.10 The bottom right portion of the “Campaigning Women” exhibit on the second floor (photograph by author, 2014)

Especially given the smaller size of many photographs and relatively illegible protest signs, it is difficult to hear the specific stories. One is, instead, affectively drawn to the timeless qualities of human emotion. Affecting visitors is a laudable goal but may reach the same stymied quicksand of universal sisterhood. Robin Morgan's call to unite all women to fight all patriarchy is undoubtedly genuine but also problematically underdeveloped. Feminist pedagogical goals are not met successfully if visitors are led to believe they belong to a family of women by virtue of their sex. The labor of examining our privilege is swept under the rug to be handled another day by another cleaning lady.

The third visual strategy which nominates universal sisterhood resides in the disorderly nature of the presentation. No hierarchy or primary visual paths guide visitors to engage with the images in a meaningful way. On a micro level, the exhibit is *spatially/visually random* and thus the message is likely difficult for visitors to retain. The visitor struggles to analyze the bigger picture with so much visual stimuli and minimal cartographic tools. I make sense of the images through my own understandings of the movement. The provocative possibilities of contradictory or conflicting images is at risk of drowning in the flood of representation.

Already, queer bodies are not prominently displayed excepting the "Black Lesbian Feminist" photograph. The gender bending visible in figure 2.11 can challenge reified roles but only if they are rendered visible, different and to be addressed. The movement's internal strife regarding homophobia, classism, race and other "isms" is unexplained. The black woman pictured below gently invites the conversation but will not be engaged so long as the visitor's privilege remains invisible. The green filtered photo on the far right shows two young white people, one male and one female, wearing the same clothing in an image that suggests the expectations of daily dress are mere constructs. Similar boundaries are pushed in many other

four women aiming pistols, and passed in silence under another of a woman holding aloft a sign reading, ‘Black lesbian feminist.’”¹⁹³ When Palin does not want to address difference it is not expected of her. Thus privilege can pass through the space uninterrupted. These three strategies meld women’s experiences of fashion, protest and everyday life together to suggest a problematic sameness. Historical anonymity captures a timeless woman which nominates a “just like me” universal sisterhood.

Conclusion

The feminist museum is a pedagogically charged space invested in consciousness-raising. Such spaces share information about history in ways that encourage critical engagement with modern issues. The WRNHP certainly does not promise to be a feminist space, however, in telling the story of the women’s rights movement’s early formation and visualizing later iterations, the park projects the feminist movement in universal terms. Resistant readings can trace “other” histories from within the framework of the women’s rights movement amid the visual and spatial layout on the east photo wall and second floor exhibits. However, the lack of framing, mixing of photo colors, and disorder allow for visitors to corroborate their perceptions rather than thoroughly challenge the privilege they carry. A unified women’s story glosses over vitally important fissures. The exhibits cover and white-wash lives though “others” are visible.

Amid politicians, activists and park supporters’ recognition that the Convention’s memory is a rich political resource for modern issues, the Visitor Center has two sensitive spots that are (often) physically bare and pedagogically unsupported. The first is the eighth pillar in the second floor timeline which is void of any markings. Rangers are quick to offer their frustration that it appears women have accomplished nothing since 1993 but blame funding problems. The

¹⁹³ Ben Smith, “Palin Takes Low-Key Return To The Road,” *CBSNews*, June 5, 2009, Online edition, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/palin-takes-low-key-return-to-the-road/>.

second is on the backwall of the second floor just passed the timeline: the Visitor Center's point of reflection. The sign reads "What will it be like when men and women are truly equal?" and encourages visitors to leave their insight on notecards. The question presumes that equality has not yet been reached which is especially evident in the "Women at Work" exhibit but is open to any kind of response.



Figure 2.12 The second floor back wall reflection point (photograph by author, 2013)

While the Visitor Center attempts to spark, to contemporize the movement, and fill the empty eighth pillar, the exhibits leading to this back wall do not offer visitors a means to critically engage with what oppression may look like in their own lives and how different it may be for their sisters and brothers. The spatial layout and visual strategies problematically nominate the universal sisterhood model of transcending difference rather than the more critically engaged concept of solidarity—the more difficult avoided by those unprepared or unwilling. The next chapter of this thesis explores the material public memory strategies in the guided tours of historical sites to better understand the park's construction of social movement memory. The last chapter then returns to the Visitor Center to examine one particular memory contestation in 1995. The important thread to keep hold of is *how* is memory rendered and what are the *feminist* implications?

Chapter 3

Practicing Authenticity with a Politics of Location: Touring the Historic Wesleyan Chapel and Stanton House

The practices enacted in the spaces of the Women's Rights National Historical Park's material resources coalesce to demonstrate the historical significance of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention. However, different types of material are made to enunciate the public memory of the movement in varying ways. While the Visitor Center brims with colorful images and exhibits, the historical sites are largely bare. The structures of the Wesleyan Chapel and Stanton House themselves are the artifacts and visitors rely on ranger guided tours to explain significance. Guides narrate much of the events that might have happened in the spaces and utilize a different mode of authenticity quite different from the Visitor Center, a mode known as objective authenticity which relies on the "recognition of the toured objects as authentic" to produce a sense of authenticity.¹⁹⁴

The Visitor Center, deploying *existential authenticity*, is clearly less invested in the original and instead directs resources to help visitors feel "they themselves are much more authentic... because they are engaging in nonordinary activities."¹⁹⁵ The Visitor Center does not privilege artifacts when conveying the history. Instead, visitors are placed in history as it continues and encouraged to help it take shape. The previous chapter notes feminist activists and scholars efforts' to propel the feminist movement toward a more complicated sense of itself and examines the ways the park's visual and spatial strategies fit in that debate. The Visitor Center is concerned with drawing connections between the grounded historic event and today's political strife—albeit vaguely. I suggest that the experience relies on problematically ahistorical images

¹⁹⁴ Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience," 351.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 351–352.

to foster universal sisterhood so that a continuation of the movement is not in the critical terms it needs to remain relevant. In the last chapter, I read the feminist political implications of the first Women's Rights Convention's public memory which orients visitors to the rest of the park. Here I analyze the post-Visitor Center experience, the twice-daily tours through the Wesleyan Chapel and the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House.

This chapter stems from the distinctions between sisterhood and solidarity by accounting for the particular practices in the tours that rhetorically convey a politically muted public memory of the women's rights movement. I first look at the tour practices of grounding the First Women's Rights Convention on authentic, political soil, or as Raka Shome and Chandra Talpade Mohanty argue for, a "politics of location." Tours convey a geopolitical map that makes specific politics seen and others unseen by communicating spatial relations. Second, with a look at Foucault's conceptualization of practices and the concept of *objective authenticity*, I explain the privileging of material artifacts to authenticate the park's origin story. The rangers' emphasis on an *objective* mode of authenticity works in contrast to the Visitor Center's *existential* authenticity, a more personal mode with feminist pedagogical value.

In the Chapel and Stanton House, a dearth of artifacts reduces the experience to largely empty, blank-slate rooms where the most frequent question posed by young visitors is, "Where is all the stuff?" The rhetorical situation is an authenticity problem. What evidence clearly marks these sites as *the sites*? How does the park demonstrate history when so little of the "trace" remains? How do rangers adapt for the evident audience expectation that underpins inquiries about the emptiness—audiences conditioned to expect the level of artifact detail on display at, for example, Colonial Williamsburg, Independence National Historical Park, Lowell National

Historical Park or the performed detail of Civil War reenactments.¹⁹⁶ Rangers cannot rely on the furnishings to illustrate history, to provide the authentic experience of “stepping into 1848.” This is not to say that the sites are in ruins. Significantly, the concept of authenticity is fraught with accusations of imprecision, redundancy and obsolescence which scholars in tourism studies, sociology and rhetoric consistently address with useful theorizing¹⁹⁷--I will explain some differentiations in the second section. Often travelers seek out ruins and express an authenticity to the experience because the space and material has the appropriate markings of time. One could easily think of tourism in the relative ruins of the Roman Forum where tourists wander among sometimes unrecognizable artifacts. The Chapel and Stanton house have been restored to the most accurate historical dimension the park can justify without guessing. The park, then, has an authenticity problem because spaces are empty with little “trace” of historical significance or symbolic meaning.

My project examines the specific guided tours across two sites: the Wesleyan Chapel and Stanton’s Home. Rangers render the sites legible by providing accessibility and explanation where the features of a self-toured space are not available (audio tracks, labels, furnishings.) The guided tour is a unique interpretive task which calls for tailored explanations and allows ranger

¹⁹⁶ The NPS refuses to organize or host battle reenactments due to the moral implications. However, plenty of historical groups provide tours, talks and perform reenactments on other sites.

¹⁹⁷ Muchazondida Mkono, “Authenticity Does Matter,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 1 (January 2012): 480–83; Yvette Reisinger and Carol J. Steiner, “Reconceptualizing Object Authenticity,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 33, no. 1 (January 2006): 65–86; Jillian M. Rickly-Boyd, “Authenticity & Aura: A Benjaminian Approach to Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 1 (January 2012): 269–89; Tazim Jamal and Steve Hill, “Developing a Framework for Indicators of Authenticity: The Place and Space of Cultural and Heritage Tourism,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 9, no. 4 (2004): 353–72; Peta S. Cook, “Constructions and Experiences of Authenticity in Medical Tourism: The Performances of Places, Spaces, Practices, Objects and Bodies,” *Tourist Studies* 10, no. 2 (August 1, 2010): 135–53; Wang, “Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience”; Sharon Zukin, “Changing Landscapes of Power: Opulence and the Urge for Authenticity,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 543–53.

individual styles to emphasize different historical, aesthetic and park related factors.¹⁹⁸ My analysis centers on a fixation on spatial and objective authenticity as expressed by rangers and many visitors. Greg Dickinson's work notes that this fixation is rooted in postmodern consumer culture anxiety as a solution to stabilize identity.¹⁹⁹ Bearing in mind David Glassberg's criticism of sweeping statements regarding anxiety of placelessness,²⁰⁰ he argues that history helps us place ourselves in a particular time among a particular people. Further, public histories are often conveyed through material space and influence our senses of history and identity.²⁰¹ Just as Gaston Bachelard's insightful work, *The Poetics of Space*, demonstrates the personal tendency to root memories in intimate spaces,²⁰² so also do we enter the fray of contesting memories, public memory, to triangulate who we are in relation to a shared past. We seek out historic sites to connect with public histories that can help us define who we are. The authenticity we tour at the WRNHP helps establish the park in public memory as a significant historical site and reinforces the park's political emphasis on voting as a woman's right.

First, I want to make clear that a heavy emphasis on authenticity is non-unique to the WRNHP, however, the park has an artifact deficit problem. Bodnar's account of NPS practices in *Remaking America*, for example, highlights the almost sacred role of the original in historic site selection. Even outright fabrications have been deemed authentic to serve civic needs and meet the expectations. For example, Abraham Lincoln's log cabin was acquired as a

¹⁹⁸ John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington, D.C: Whalesback Books, 1992); Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Gordon Fyfe, "Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies 12 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 33–49.

¹⁹⁹ Greg Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 5–27; Stewart and Dickinson, "Enunciating Locality in the Postmodern Suburb"; Dickinson, "Memories for Sale."

²⁰⁰ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 120–122.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 8.

²⁰² Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

reconstructed site in 1916, however, visitors were led to believe that the site, largely *as is*, was Lincoln's birth home until 1968.²⁰³ The value of the site as a historic and civic symbol trumped interpretive rigor and transparency. In 1956, the "Mission 66" initiative to reimagine the NPS as a more overt civic educator which could better meet to needs of the growing visitor populations in search of leisure, education and authentic history.²⁰⁴

The WRNHP historic sites are largely empty of artifacts and appear unfinished due to what rangers say is a lack of historical evidence to justify restoration even to "period era" furnishings. The Chapel and Stanton House restoration projects were begun long after the original event (secured by the NPS in 1985 and 1982, respectively) and have been carried out based on a strict "better not to guess" policy which requires precise historical evidence to support design decisions.²⁰⁵ I argue that tour guides respond by employing two different practices to establish *objective authenticity*. First, guides map the "politics of location" through detailed historical accounts of the Seneca Falls area, a spatial technique. The map illustrates the political nature of Seneca County soil. Second, guides attend to the immediately present material to establish *distantly authentic* and the *invisibly authentic*, a material technique. Guides are careful to explain that artifacts have relative authenticity and spend a significant amount of time explaining what is *not* present via what *is*. The Chapel tour best exemplifies the first practice while the Stanton House offers the most insight into the second. Next, I explain how I interacted with the sites and tours.

²⁰³ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 192.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 196–200.

²⁰⁵ All rangers expressed this policy clearly with varying levels of conviction. Additionally, both sites have recently undergone major restoration projects but rangers assure us that nothing is in the works to continue, in part, due to this policy. It is a sense of "this is the best we can do given what we know."

Method

My project invokes a meld of field methods and the reading of practices as a rhetoric trained participant-observer. My observations were unstructured visits in which I embedded myself in several tours of the same sites in order to read across different ranger's touring styles.²⁰⁶²⁰⁷ No ranger exhibited strict script-reading. There remains some diversity in the order, emphasis and level of detail offered. By positioning myself as a visitor experiencing the exhibits alongside others, I could better engage with how visitor's interpret or are guided to interpret the texts. A similar approach in tourism studies is called the "reflexive tradition" which works to find a balance between the researcher's observations and those expressed by other visitors. Rhetorical field methods recognize the participating critic's role in shaping the rhetoric of the event.²⁰⁸ Due to the small size of the tours,²⁰⁹ any participant is intimately involved in shaping the tour. I know from informal discussions with rangers that they feel comfortable adapting messages based on the make-up of the audience and their reactions. More than feeling comfortable, rangers felt it a necessary part of their job and interpretive training stresses this quality of engagement.²¹⁰ As a result, my marked and unmarked body and my presentation of interest and attentiveness had a hand in shaping the kind of information told to me and others in the tour. My frequent visits and the small number of artifacts meant that I could track consistencies in the tours.

²⁰⁶ A similar approach is seen in Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*.

²⁰⁷ Philip Pearce, "Professing Tourism: Tourism Academics as Educators, Researchers and Change Leaders," *Journal of Tourism Studies* 16, no. 2 (n.d.): 21–33.

²⁰⁸ Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography."

²⁰⁹ Some tours were as small as myself and one other individual. In other instances, I experienced the tour with a large family or several small families making for a group of 5-8.

²¹⁰ Park administrators explained on several occasions that rangers move up through the ranks, in part, through additional interpretive training. Two of the three rangers I interacted with were the highest level of park ranger (grade 9) with specialized education about conveying history to the public. One administrator highlighted that audience adaptation and getting across the main ideas are two important factors of the training.

Accounting for the components I could arrange or plan for would be an incomplete explanation of my interactions and could not possibly include all sources. *Serendipity*, a concept forwarded by ethnographers Richard Handler and Eric Gable, describes the kind of field work interactions that benefit both the researcher and the member of the community or institution being studied.²¹¹ These insightful moments may reveal information a researcher would otherwise never be aware of and/or will contextualize future observations. I had frequent informal conversations with park rangers, visitors and community members which helped me grasp the multiple cultural influences, park transformation and implications of the park's memory work.

Touring the Chapel: Mapping a Politics of Location

As the previous chapter explained, visitors first experience the Visitor Center and are there encouraged to watch the docu-drama orientation film which contextualizes the movement's origins, best-known heroines and some of the following effects told through letters of a little-known convention attendee and her relations. Visitors can then experience the first floor statues which encourage a connection between today's individuals with the goals of the convention organizers and attendees. The spatial design then draws audiences to the controversial east photo wall which climbs the stairs to the second floor exhibit space. On the second floor, more detailed historical information contextualizes the 1848 event and then guides visitors to the timeline pillars. From this "spine" at the center of the second floor space, visitors can move to the adjacent exhibits with relative accessibility. Space and visual design promote certain political readings which rangers are only involved in when visitors ask questions about the "First Wave" Lloyd Lillie statues near the information desk. In the Visitor Center, I experience hundreds of images with little to no historical context and am encouraged to "be the judge," as interactive installations encourage me to take sides on given controversies. A particular mode of authenticity

²¹¹ Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 21.

functions here which is better understood in stark contrast to that which is relied upon during the historic buildings tours.

While there are other historical sites in the park's purview (like the Jane Hunt House in Waterloo), these two are the only sites open year round and are significantly more accessible. The Chapel is a matter of yards away from the Visitor Center entrance, while the Stanton House is less than a mile drive (a distance some visitors walk instead of drive.) Tours of the Chapel and the Stanton House are offered twice daily. Unlike the Visitor Center, both sites are generally closed to the public unless accompanied by a ranger. The Visitor Center PA system rings throughout the building to announce the Chapel tour departure times, an estimation of the tour's time and an invitation to meet rangers at the Stanton House for another tour immediately following the Chapel. The ranger, once finished with the first tour, explains that visitors can drive independently to meet her at the Stanton House (less than a mile away) for the next tour. Tour lengths are ranger and visitor dependent but tend to last around 20 minutes. However, the Stanton House tour is scheduled to begin forty-five minutes after the Chapel tour's start. Collecting at the information desk, one ranger will greet the visitors, briefly encourage those in earshot to join and introduce themselves before leading the group out the front door and down the block of Seneca Fall's historic district to the locked door of the Wesleyan Chapel.

Walking to the Chapel: Physical Context

The walk is short down Fall Street, a matter of a few hundred yards. In the cold, visitors may not examine the route, however, the visual context is rich and commonly brought up during the tour. To the left, visitors take in the features of the green space (barring snow) slightly below street level that lies between the Visitor Center and Wesleyan Chapel. Looking down into the small park (white in the winter and green otherwise), the most significant feature is the metal wall installed down the length of the Visitor Center which becomes a waterwall in the warm months.

The look and feel of the wall adds a fluid dimension to the engraved words of the Declaration of Sentiments and one hundred signatures. The letters are clean, fresh and inviting. When posed, rangers immediately answer questions about the wall and often encourage visitors to go read and touch it after the tour. An educational exhibit along the sidewalk explains briefly the 1848 event and the “Great Lighthouse” it became due to its role in formalizing the women’s rights movement. At the corner just passed the Chapel stands a tall blue and yellow sign installed in 1932 by the New York State Education Department which proclaims, “FIRST CONVENTION FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS HELD HERE 1848.” The Chapel has an otherwise plain façade.



Figure 3.1 Wesleyan Chapel Exterior as one walks from the Visitor Center (courtesy of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park Facebook page)

Across Fall Street, the hamlet’s Elizabeth Cady Stanton Park looks over the Cayuga-Seneca Canal and helps link visitors to the water. Behind the park and across the canal stands a

tall and broad building with “SENECA KNITTING MILLS” painted between the second and third story windows. An iconic Seneca Falls image, questions regarding its history usually ask about the connections to the park and what the building is used for today. Rangers point out that the roughly 170 year old mill only recently went out of business and is slated to be the new home of the Women’s Hall of Fame which currently resides a block farther down Fall Street. Many of the 1848 convention attendees were certainly women working at the mill. Visitors and rangers rely on these outside elements to better orient themselves when conveying history or asking questions about history.

Upon unlocking and opening the Chapel door, the ranger’s voice will echo with “have a seat.” The invitation can only refer to the primary furniture in the one-room building; six broad benches which belonged to the half of the Wesleyan Methodist congregation who broke from the original church family. Rangers tend to let visitors spend a few moments looking around at the exposed original interior roof sheathing and beams, foundation, brick and wall plaster. The stone floor, high ceiling and bare walls create a cool, quiet environment much different from the image-driven scenes in the Visitor Center. Dispersed along the walls are six brief educational exhibits which explain elements of the building’s role and history. Visitors may take 1 to 2 minutes to read each exhibit.

It is clear not everything is original. The old is striking against the new. The north and south interior walls are of a contemporary white plaster, while the east and west walls are only partially made up of apparently original brick. Perfectly new bricks of a similar color serve to complete the building. The brick patchwork is visible on the east and west walls from the exterior. Multiple factors exist primarily to support and protect the building like the metal braces that support the roof, the clear plastic covering over original wall plaster where it exists over the

bricks, and the short metal guardrails that run along the edges of the floor to protect the original foundation where it has been made visible. The feel is unfinished and unpolished. The limiting factor of these tours does not seem to be time or interest but rather material artifacts. Rangers' first response is to give geographical context and root this memory amidst a fellowship of many others spatially near. Rangers convey a map of the political landscape which nominated Seneca Falls and this particular building as appropriate sited for political action. While they also give explanations of the varying levels of authenticity present, the Stanton House is a better example of the second practice.

Politics of Location for a Sense of History

Before explaining how ranger's provide a sense of history through a type of "politics of location," I want to first explain the concept. The feminist critical concept of "politics of location" demands a critical engagement of one's personal identity in a network of other identities. The cartographic metaphor is valuable to map the multidimensional terrain of identity and power, however, as Raka Shome argues, an ignorance of the physical nature of "politics of location" risks overlooking the spatial means through which cultural power flows and is enunciated.²¹² Shome regrets that the turn to "politics of location" is a "spatial move" in name only which primarily deploys location as social markers like "white, middle class woman." I argue that Chandra Talpade Mohanty does more to encourage a grounded approach that addresses Michel Foucault's challenge that "a whole history remains to be written of spaces—which would at the same time be the history of power—from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat."²¹³

The "politics of location" Mohanty highlights (with Biddy Martin in her chapter analyzing Minnie Bruce Pratt's exploration of memory through the spaces of her childhood)

²¹² Shome, "Space Matters," 43.

²¹³ As cited by Shome from *Power/knowledge*, 1980. Ibid., 39.

takes space seriously to reveal identity-making power dynamics and their histories. Pratt offers an example of one who *engages with*, rather than *transcends*, difference. She discovers where it is materially and how it has been hidden through an awareness of the tentative nature of identities and exploration of the “physical anchoring points” of her childhood. Mohanty and Martin explain that physicality is “carried” as “so often we act out the present against the backdrop of the past, within a frame of perception that is so familiar, so safe that it is terrifying to risk changing it even when we know our perceptions are distorted, limited, constricted by that old view.”²¹⁴ Exclusion and stable notions of “being home” (versus “not being home”) keep what ought to be seen *in place*. This radical feminist approach is a brave and unsettling process of descending from the abstract heights of universalizing feminism and privilege to an engagement with how geography affects demography and the relationships between identities.²¹⁵

Mapping the Chapel

While rangers are not overtly engaged in a feminist project intent on re-evaluating geography, each tour begins with a broad explanation of the historic landscape. Contextualizing narratives about geography are the texts through which visitors are encouraged to remember the space as progressive and politically charged. Rangers demonstrate that, as David Glassberg demonstrates, “we attach history to places.”²¹⁶ Visitors are usually reminded of historical factors they are likely already familiar of regarding the 18th century macro geopolitics of Southern slavery and the thriving abolitionist movement (in the US and UK) and Underground Railroad of the north. One ranger began the tour with the rhetorical question, “Why here?” before triangulating Western New York on this geopolitical map. Gradually, New York comes into focus. The Second Great Awakening transformed the area and created the “Burned Over

²¹⁴ Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*, 90.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90–91.

²¹⁶ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 8.

District,” of which Genesee County is the historic center. Quaker activists, we are told, were an important factor in New York’s abolitionist organizing and celebrated equality in a sense that made the women’s rights movement a possibility. For example, the Quaker networks are thanked for bringing Lucriettia Mott through Genesee County at a time when her sister, Martha Wright, could re-introduce her to Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The mutual disgust Mott and Stanton shared when both were barred from full participation at London’s 1840 World Antislavery Convention was rekindled and the union grew to include Mary Ann McClintock and Jane Hunt. Rangers stress that 3 of the 5 original organizers were Quakers and word travelled about the convention through many of the same channels already used for the abolitionist and temperance movements.

The micro dimension of specific bodies in space (e.g. Stanton, Mott and Anthony) is certainly where the ranger devotes significant detail. However, individual histories are woven in at varying points. William Lloyd Garrison’s story, for example, emerges when mapping the event’s spatial proximity to abolition both before and after. For one ranger, there were two main reasons the 1848 convention took place in Seneca Falls. First, was because Stanton lived in Seneca Falls and, second, due to Western New York’s political and religious landscape. Another ranger moved from the macro political landscape to the more specific Waterloo and Seneca Falls places. Spatial dimensions place specific actors within proximity to community resources and political environments which made the convention possible. Though the Declaration of Sentiments served as a template, rangers stress that no document like the Declaration of Sentiments (drafted in Jane Hunt’s Waterloo house) existed before. We learn that the document gave voice to a problem otherwise articulated in Europe. Additionally, they assure audiences that this was “the *first* women’s rights convention” though the organizers and many of the attendees were activists on other fronts.

Tours did not convey the “politics of location” in equal amounts. A third ranger began the tour with the Chapel’s history in a way that responded first to the “why this building” only to later contextualize the convention and then rely the commemorations that followed. This ranger seemed to explain the history of the history first, a factor Blair et al argue needs critical attention as “public memory has a history.”²¹⁷ For example, she explains that we cannot know precisely how many attended the convention but that “someone in the 1970s decided that ‘crowded’ meant 300 people.” Only later does she explain 1848 specific information like the probable rationale behind the declaration’s title as one “of Sentiments.” The ranger explains that “sentiments” was the “common language for grievances or ideas.” The conflicting nature of memory is especially evident when the decisions that shape it come to light. Other rangers did not provide such detail at the Chapel.

Geography continues to take root in a more spatially immediate sense as the details of the convention emerge. Details will vary and, likely, because visitors’ questions vary and rangers adapt for audiences. Rangers are consistent in explaining that the three day convention was planned in extremely short order. The low plain stage, we are told, is a rough guestimate from where Stanton read aloud the Declaration of Sentiments, an act culturally “unbecoming” of a woman. The waterwall is gestured to at times. Debates took place “right here” about the Declaration’s merits, especially the controversial call to allow women the right to vote. Rangers, without fail, explain that Frederick Douglass meaningfully argued for women’s suffrage to be included. Douglass is a culturally recognizable icon for abolition and the Underground Railroad thus he has public memory currency for rangers who want to make a firm connection. In this sense, rangers map the political locations of nearby abolitionist groups in Rochester and throughout the Underground Railroad network with the concept of universal adult suffrage—a

²¹⁷ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, “Introduction,” 10.

tactic Hillary Clinton also used in her 1998 commemoration speech when she referenced Harriet Tubman's home in Auburn, NY. When Susan B. Anthony comes up either in the talk or during questions, the ranger explains that while she lived in nearby Rochester, she did not come to Seneca Falls until later when Amelia Bloomer introduced Stanton and Anthony and the two forged a powerful political duo. More of Anthony's life emerges from within the spaces of Stanton's home. External spaces are drawn in as reference points. Rangers often gesture in the southern direction of the Seneca Knitting Mill and explain that many of the known signatories and, probably, others who left no mark were working class young women. Visitors are left with a strong impression of a swift, powerful and radical event rooted in the very Chapel in which they sit.

By this point in the tour, two spatial factors are clear. First, the macro landscape nominates Seneca Falls as an ideal backdrop for the convention. And second, we stand, as Mott, Stanton, and Wright did, on political grounds. The tours attend to how location was key both materially and politically in bringing together like minds for an historic resolution. In closing before questions, rangers consistently recount the convention's influence which pans out again to the larger geopolitical map. We are told that Douglass' publication of the Declaration of Sentiments in *The North Star* circulated ideas on the national scale. Vicious editorials and denouncements from all sides demonstrate the uphill battle suffragists faced and did not win federally until 1920. The timeline tends to end here seemingly because it was the most contentious element of the Declaration and the convention's sweetest victory. Enfranchisement is emphasized by the structure of the political timeline: 1800s to 1920. Only one female ranger referenced the ongoing nature of the Declaration of Sentiments stating, "Today, it's not just

about women. It's about anyone who doesn't feel they are included. It's about expanding 'human right.'"²¹⁸

Mapping Commemoration Selectively

At this point in the tour, politics of location turn to the history of commemoration and restoration. The selectivity of memory work is traceable in the history of commemoration. Which political activities on the same soil go without mention? Commemoration is usually the last element and marks a transition in the tours where material traces become more important. Two particular materials are pointed to: the aforementioned 1932 blue and yellow sign on Fall Street and the 1908 plaque donated by Stanton's daughter, Harriet Stanton Blatch to commemorate the convention's 60th anniversary. Originally an exterior plaque, it was reinstalled on the Chapel's east wall while a replica was created for the exterior. Material traces highlight the site's significance throughout time and fill the narrative gap between 1848 and 1980 when the park was established (more than 130 years after the event). The history of restoration is a matter rangers are well versed in perhaps because there are frequent visitor inquiries or because it was so relatively recent.

However, not all commemorations get a mention. Unofficial commemorations like the one embodied by the 1983 all-women Seneca Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice in protest of nuclear weapons and patriarchy have no obvious trace in the Chapel or on Fall Street. The July group started at the Chapel site and intended to march to the Romulus encampment but were stopped in Waterloo where police had to de-escalate community aggression by jailing dozens of marchers and locals. I was directed to Louise Krasniewicz's thoughtful account of the encampment in *Nuclear Summer: The Clash of Communities at the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment* after the tour by a ranger who recognized my interest in the

²¹⁸ There is an unmistakable echo of Hillary Clinton's 1994 speech in Beijing where she famously challenged the world to adopt the philosophy that "women's rights are human rights."

history of the park. The omission from the usual tours is telling. Functionally, the group has no material trace within the Visitor Center or within the rhetorical post-convention map the rangers offer. Below is the cover of the encampment's handbook which explains the philosophical justification, social obligations and political goals of the encampment. The cover²¹⁹ locates a trend of woman-led activist in Western New York and works enthymematically to establish Western New York as feminist ground. The handbook draws direct links to one particular convention organizer:

The women's peace encampment grew out of the early women's rights movement. Lucretia Mott a Quaker from Nantucket who became an early activist in Philadelphia in the anti-slavery and women's rights societies, was one of the first espousers of peace and nonviolence in this country. The first Women's Rights Convention she co-convened in 1848 sparked a national movement which became international with the formation of the International Suffrage Alliance, many of whose members were pacifists.

²¹⁹ The image is quite popular. While I could not find the document in the files on the encampment in the park's archive, it has been circulated elsewhere from Wikipedia to Pinterest. The Women's History Archives at Smith College online devote a 40-minute slideshow telling the "herstory" of the movement and using the image as a means to, again, root the movement in the political soil of Western New York.

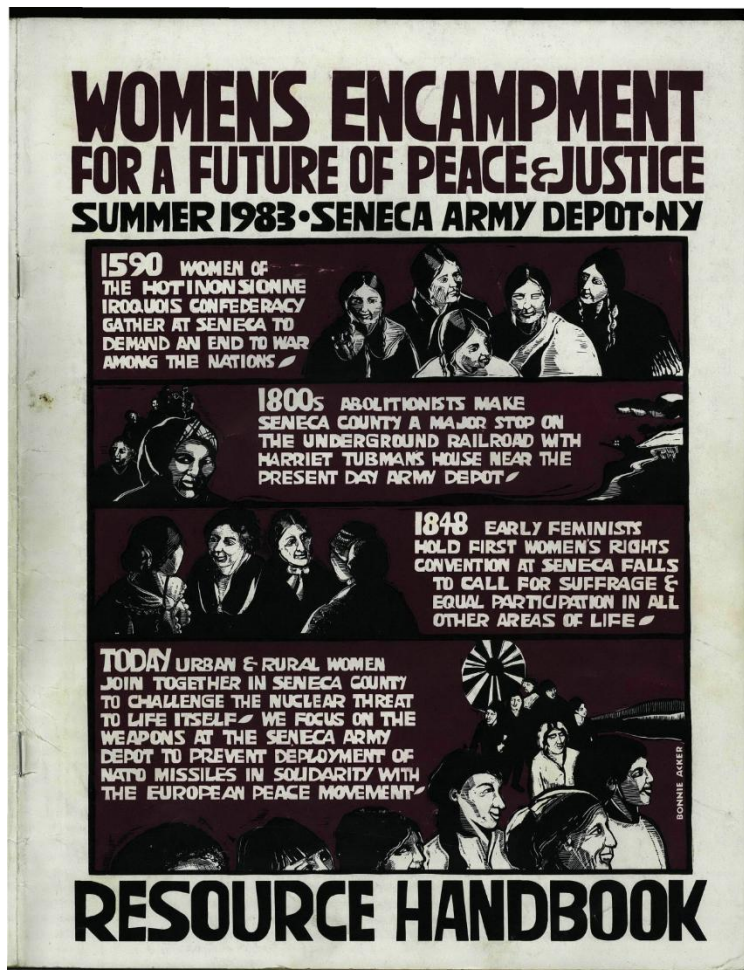


Figure 3.2 Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Resource Handbook Cover, (courtesy of the Barnard Center for Research on Women ephemera collection, <http://bcrw.barnard.edu/archive/>, "Women's Encampment Handbook")

Omissions of controversial ties are not in the interest of feminist pedagogical goals that mean to make the "politics of location" a material matter of engagement. The political landscape conveyed in the tours roots identity in a political heritage for equal access to the voting booth. One ranger explained that the convention's values were consistent with calls for equality from the likes of Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft in a general "movement that was lasting from the birth of this nation." The Declaration of Independence is a sensible template for those helping to fashion the American ideal of a "more perfect union" which the NPS has showcased

before as in the case of the Independence National Historical Park.²²⁰ While visitors may be impacted by the realization that women's right to vote is a relatively new guarantee in the US,²²¹ there is little effort to associate the space with more radical outgrowths of the 1848 event. The brave and unsettling engagement Pratt exemplifies is more radical an experience than that which the tours stage.

Clearly, visitors are affected by the park. Visitor interest during the tour and gratitude (expressed in the Visitor Center guestbook) promise that place draws people and politics of location expands their imagination. Visitors express gratitude for the chance to share the story with younger female members of their families or organization (e.g. Girl Scout troop.) What is more, visitors express learning a lot and feeling inspired.²²² While the guestbook archives are not accessible to researchers, the guestbook entries I could peruse in the Visitor Center indicated enthusiasm for the park and its project. Entries often echoed "great museum," "wonderful experience," "inspiring," "we learned a lot/much yet to be accomplished!" and even "wonderful place! Go girls!" Several entries also promised to return and share the experience with young female members which underscores how pedagogically valuable many visitors understand the site to be. The site encourages one to sit roughly where early feminists did and hear echoes between walls that once carried the voices of Douglass, Stanton, Mott and a great many other brave souls. At once, one is in the middle of the "Burned Over District" and at the beginning of the long road to full female enfranchisement. Mott and Stanton's history, located under our feet

²²⁰ Aden, "Redefining the 'Cradle of Liberty.'"

²²¹ Comedian C. K. Louis quipped on *Saturday Night Live* March 29th 2014 that "American democracy is 94 years old. There are three people in my building older than American democracy." The implication of the joke is that the fact is generally unknown, surprising and important.

²²² While the guestbook is located in the Visitor Center and it is unclear at which point in their visit individuals fill it out (seemingly when preparing to leave the park), the tours' lack of artifact material and seemingly underdeveloped presentation seem relatively managed.

now, become a part of the histories we carry with us, made personal through proximity. The political depth and complexity are, however, limited.

Omissions such as the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment are exemplar of the park's careful memory work. Those who are exemplar (i.e. show up on the map) embody the ideal political engagement which makes use of the voting apparatus. Social critiques are made plainly in the Declaration of Sentiments but the tours highlight the passage of the 19th amendment as the convention's primary accomplishment. The tour's "politics of location" root visitors in new spaces but do not encourage a dismantling of privilege through a critical lens on how the map is made and who is invisible on it.



Figure 4.1 Image of the “Black Lesbian Feminist” in its original position on the east photo wall of the Visitor Center (courtesy of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park Facebook page)

Touring the Stanton House: Practices of Authenticity

With the stage located on historically political soil, I now turn to the setting of the stage through material artifacts. In the last section, I explained how tours’ historical accounts triangulate Seneca County as the obvious choice for the groundbreaking convention undergirding the claims to a patriotic origin story for women’s rights. It is selective memory work to promote, above all, the foremothers of women’s right to vote through a specific timeline. Memory, for the guide and visitors alike, is stored in the visual cues of the Chapel. Similarly, ancient Greeks practiced spatialized memory by figuratively placing or mapping ideas in spaces for orderly recall.²²³ Particular narratives match up with specific spaces. Historical accounts are recalled and explained in detail so as to infuse the space with the authentic experience of *being there*. Authenticity that is activated through experience or performance, what Wang calls *existential authenticity* implicated by postmodernist thinking, can avoid entirely questions of material-centered authenticity and can instead install nostalgia or be an identity-work resource. However, the memory work in the Chapel space is not simply sourced from the spatial relations for existential authenticity. The landscape comes into view as bodies are stationary usually sitting on antique pews. Nearing the end of the talk, the ranger flows from commemorative history to the building’s record and an explanation for its relative emptiness and unfinished aesthetic.

Without fail, rangers recount elements of the Chapel’s restoration, in part, to hedge for the inevitable queries, “so, what’s real?” and “is it finished?” They spend considerable time pointing out what is real, nearly real and entirely fabricated. For example, visitors ask how convention organizers managed 300 people in the building and gesture to what appear to be

²²³ Blair, Dickinson, and Ott, “Introduction”; Dickinson, “Memories for Sale.” These scholars are among the many who recount the Greek’s unique use of material as memory aid. The opening narrative of the “Introduction” and Dickinson’s analysis in “Memories for Sale” are especially instructive.

rivets halfway up the west and east walls— possible evidence of a former second floor balcony. Additionally, the relative authenticity of segments of the roof, wall plaster, floor, foundation and layout are elements the visitor will become familiar. At the Stanton House, artifacts play a larger role in introducing Stanton’s life and work. Particular historic accounts are “stored” in each of the five main rooms and the material traces are “read” to convey what is known about the Stanton family, even if only minor details can be interpreted.

In this section, I outline two specific modes of authenticity to better understand how the park presents the women’s rights origin story, authenticating a history. First, I explain the Foucauldian approach to space and objects which undergirds the rhetorical nature of authenticity. Second, I provide a brief summary of objective authenticity and existential authenticity and the perspectives from which each operates. In the final section, the Stanton House tours demonstrate the role of objective authenticity at the park.

Foucault, Material Practices and Power

My analysis is informed by Michel Foucault’s methodology which focuses on the quotidian practices as enunciations of power relations. It is a de-naturalizing analysis that reveals the complex and inherent interplay between the material modes of production and discursive formations. The approach pivots from the historian’s tendency to ask *what* are specific practices to instead ask *how* practices or “programs of conduct” are articulated over and upon others.²²⁴ This shift in focus targets not the summits or high points in history but the relations between practices, their transformations over time and aim to decipher the discourses they support. Paul Veyne’s thorough work demonstrates that a question of *how* in place of *what* keeps the analyst

²²⁴ Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 74.

from freezing the objects of study into relations that do not hold across time because the object itself does not exist in the same way.²²⁵

A Foucauldian reading of space and material in these tours works to discern, in part, the authorized field of relationships. Foucault states “space is fundamental in any exercise of power”²²⁶ and power is unique in different spaces as “we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.”²²⁷ Critics must be cognizant of the “cluster of relations” that locate them in the complicated and ever transforming web of power relations²²⁸ —what Raka Shome calls the “dynamic relations of force.”²²⁹ Foucault argues that effective methodology must take into account the elements of everyday practices, the social relations as expressed through practices and spatial distribution.²³⁰ Paul Veyne illustrates this point metaphorically: the iceberg and the kaleidoscope. The first demonstrates the *seen* practices that are only part of the larger system of relational practices and forces that are not conceptualized by our constituted consciousness. Foucault’s method works to precisely articulate otherwise seemingly natural and self-evident practices. From such details we “read” or visualize the palimpsest of historical processes that form the grammar(s) of practices. When the previously self-evident is closely observed (and thus conceptualized) in terms of function and operation then the submerged majority of the iceberg becomes visible.

²²⁵ Paul Veyne, “Foucault Revolutionizes History,” in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Catherine Porter, 1997, 146–82.

²²⁶ Michel Foucault, “Space, Power Knowledge,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During, 2nd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 1999), 140.

²²⁷ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 23.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Shome, “Space Matters,” 54.

²³⁰ Foucault, “Space, Power Knowledge,” 136.

The kaleidoscope metaphor illustrates the relation of objects to prediscursive forms and practices. “Objects,” Veyne argues “are only correlatives of practices.”²³¹ Practices “engender” the objects they need to function. Simply put, a ledge is whatever the practices make it, be that a bench, shelf or symbol of class and when you turn the kaleidoscope the object will be transform as well. Museum studies scholar Rhiannon Mason credits Foucault for helping museum scholars recognize a gestalt of factors “viewed in concert to understand the possible meanings of the museum.”²³² Lincoln’s cabin was his *authentic* cabin because the NPS and local economy practiced preservation policy in and around it. One experiences materiality through a flux of relations that *redefine* the purpose of objects and thus their role in the palimpsest of practices.

Veyne explores naturalization of objects through practice by looking at how a diversity of approaches objectivize madness speaks to the safe presumption that “no natural object is hidden behind the thing.”²³³ As the object is not natural “we cannot have a ‘reasonable’ discussion of the ‘correct’ attitude to be ‘adopted’ towards it.”²³⁴ One’s criticism is always already contextualizing the object although historicizing its movement or circulation can engender a –*philia* relationship to the process of meaning and my last chapter exemplifies this mode.²³⁵ My analysis here looks at one layer of the practices of authenticity in the moments and spaces I experienced at the WRNHP. The objects, and practices that make them *mean*, explain how the park does or does not demonstrate feminist pedagogical ideals discussed in the previous chapter.

²³¹ Veyne, “Foucault Revolutionizes History,” 160.

²³² Rhiannon Mason, “Cultural Theory and Museum Studies,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies 12 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 26.

²³³ Veyne, “Foucault Revolutionizes History,” 168–169.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

²³⁵ Cara A. Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, “‘Sighting’ the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 4 (November 2004): 377–402.

Authenticity

Now that I have explained my orientation to museum space, I turn to the concept of authenticity and its enunciation through particular practices. That which is authentic in historic terms often depends upon its perceived proximity to history, from the perspectives of both audiences and preservationists. The audience's expectations and those of "experts" influence each other in complex ways. Details once overlooked have become painstakingly important as they can become associable with history. Pierre Nora argues that the frenzied search for the "trace" is fueled by anxiety regarding what could be lost resulting in the vast expansion and accumulation of the archive:

Fear of a rapid and final disappearance combines with anxiety about the meaning of the present and uncertainty about the future to give even the most humble testimony, the most modest vestige, the potential dignity of the memorable... Memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstitution. Its new vocation is to record; delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin. What we call memory is in fact the gigantic and breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled.²³⁶

Memory, as a practice of "meticulous reconstitution," prioritizes the material trace which underpins claims of authenticity. Digital archives may constitute archives with different notions of authenticity, however, in material museums and historic sites the material archive justifies significance and, in the case of the WRNHP, federal recognition and funding. Further, Greg Dickinson argues that "the explosion in numbers and popularity of historical museums, and the exponential growth of visits to state and national parks all suggest that individuals are searching for spaces that seem authentic or real."²³⁷ The role of the body amidst the authentic, doing the

²³⁶ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13.

²³⁷ Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," 10.

authentic is a powerful, sensational and intertextual experience that involves more than top-down experts' dictations of "realness."

We work to build stable selves and relationships to history based on projections which cross and clash with those of others. Authenticity is contested ground, as Stephen King points out that parties on all sides of memory clashes will appeal to authenticity because heavy interpretation contextualizes it for present purposes.²³⁸ Echoing Foucault and Veyne, Edward Bruner argues authenticity is "no longer... a property inherent in an object, forever fixed in time; it is seen as a struggle, a social process, in which competing interests argue for their own interpretation of history."²³⁹ And even as the realm of authentic is a battle between forces with identity investments at stake, the very term is ambiguous. In a thorough and highly cited account of the implications of three major philosophies (Objectivist, Constructivist, Postmodern) on the concept authenticity, sociologist Ning Wang delineates the varying roles material traces serve. He explains that postmodernists "do not consider inauthenticity a problem,"²⁴⁰ and because the museum tours revolve around that which is authentic as opposed to inauthentic I focus on the first two. Most museum professionals and experts prefer *objective authenticity* which strictly and cleanly privileges the authoritatively certified original in accurate simulation.²⁴¹ *Constructive authenticity* better accounts for mass tourist experiences in that it does not operate in the realm of black or white, authentic or inauthentic but assumes reality is "pluralistic and plastic."²⁴² In tracing the literature of the constructivist approach to authenticity, Wang highlights several

²³⁸ Stephen A. King, "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums: Constructive Authenticity and the Primitive Blues Subject," *Southern Communication Journal* 71, no. 3 (September 2006): 235.

²³⁹ As quoted in Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience," 355.

²⁴⁰ He explains that "Constructivists are reluctant to dig a tomb for "authenticity" and they try to rescue the term by revising its meanings; postmodernists have buried it." Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience," 358."

²⁴¹ Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience," 352–353.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 354.

distinctions that illuminate the rhetorical dimensions of the materiality of memory in museums. Of most importance is that the constructive authenticity viewpoint assumes “there is no absolute and static original or origin on which the absolute authenticity of originals relies” and that “origins and traditions themselves are themselves invented and constructed in terms of the contexts where one is and in terms of the needs of the present.”²⁴³ Accordingly, authenticity is both context-bound and perspective dependent, a symbolic experience. The divide between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity is a helpful analytical lens through which the tours can be read.

Authenticity, according to ethnographers Handler and Gable, is deeply intertwined with reputation and for museums is *the* selling point.²⁴⁴ However, standards of authenticity stand uneasily on shifting sands. A reliance on objective authenticity, a recognition that *this is original*, sometimes gives way to constructivist perspectives that reveal the politics of memory. There are significant material and social implications of “the real” especially as it relates to public memory. Handler and Gable document the multiple transformations experienced in the development of Colonial Williamsburg. Locals held specific ideas of what was “colonial” and “historically significant” which had little value as Rockefeller funded preservation efforts brought along with it a new set of “experts” with their own ideas of “colonial” and “historically significant.” “Authenticity” became “a function of the approval of experts.”²⁴⁵ Notions of legitimacy continues to transform as Christmas is anachronistically presented to adhere to nostalgic and business interests.

²⁴³ Ibid., 355.

²⁴⁴ Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 45.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 35.

Objective Authenticity Tension in the Stanton House Tours

On the heels of the Chapel tour, visitors are welcome to find their own way to the Stanton House a mere mile away. Most drive down Fall Street and across the historic river. Heading east down the river, visitors pass historic churches and a prominent roadside statue called “When Anthony met Stanton” depicting Amelia Bloomer introducing the two activists. Seneca Falls is affectively steeped in Stanton’s history, traces of her life marked throughout the area. Rangers welcome visitors into the white two-story house. While the Chapel and Visitor Center are surrounded by Historic Seneca Falls and the business and tourist center of Fall Street, Stanton’s house is at the end of the street in a quiet neighborhood very near a wide section in the river. Similar trappings mark the building. Outside there is a familiar 1932 blue and yellow plaque announces “PROMOTER OF THE FIRST WOMAN’S RIGHTS CONVENTION LIVED HERE. CONVENTION WAS HELD ACROSS THE RIVER” and an exhibit sign entitled “We Will Accomplish Wonders.” The exhibit focuses on the many activists who visited Stanton at this site including Mott, Wright, Douglass, Anthony and William Lloyd Garrison. The exhibit primarily highlights Stanton and Anthony’s excitement to work together and their productive cooperation.



Figure 3.3 Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s House on Washington Street as one would approach from the parking area (courtesy of park website Women’s Rights NHP Visitor Center photo gallery, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton House 1”)

Upon entering the home, visitors stand in the entryway peering up the stairs and into the two rooms to the left and right. Printed wallpaper lines rooms largely vacant of furnishings and decorations. It is immediately clear that either furnishings are not yet installed or the house exhibits but the skeleton of life for the Stanton family. Rangers roughly follow the same order of rooms, excavating particular narratives from particular spaces based on the probable function of the room. In the Stanton House, we see attention to specific space as it nominates a first-person perspective, a chance to become intimate with Stanton’s story. Visitors move through five main rooms that nominate different dimensions of Stanton and her life as a mother, wife and activist. The Stanton House is an excellent example of spatial “memory storage,” a practice that infuses space with particular meanings.

A Narrative Walk Through the House

While tours may begin at different ends of the first floor, rangers express similar stories in each space and utilize material artifacts and parts of the building to convey the degree of originality present. The objective authenticity, also practiced in the Chapel, operates in the narratives stored in the Stanton House rooms. Where constructivist authenticity does not rely on the originality of toured objects, the rangers draw visitors to particular places from which stories emerge. They work to connect spaces with the authentic activities. Regardless of where the tours begin, rangers first introduce the house and its relationship to the Stantons. The family, with three sons, moved to Seneca Falls in 1847 for Henry Stanton's health and career, and left for New York City in 1862 with four more children. We learn that the house was a gift from her father, Daniel Cady, to his daughter but was specifically deeded in her name and not Henry's for whom Cady held a low opinion. Home ownership illustrates Stanton's strong investment in women's property rights. The Cady family were a well-connected, educated and wealthy family and Henry Stanton struggled to launch a consistently lucrative career throughout their marriage. Additionally, we are briefed on the NPS procurement of the property in 1982 and the very recent renovations. Before more stories emerge, visitors are oriented to a property renovated to what rangers say is "to the best of [the NPS] knowledge." Thus begins the Stanton House tour fixation on the accuracy of the site's authenticity.

Some tours begin in the Formal Dining Room to the right of the entry while others begin to the left in the Family Room which leads to the Formal Living Room. Each room nominates specific dimensions which I will briefly trace. In the Formal Dining Room visitors learn of the basic structure of running the house. Who did the housekeeping and how? We learn that Stanton, a strict and demanding housekeeper, was an equal opportunity house-chores mother. Her eldest children, Daniel, Henry and Gerrit, were enlisted to don formal serving attire to attend dinner

guests. The narrow staircase tucked away in the corner is pointed to as the “servant stairs” though it leads to the elder boys’ room upstairs. The stairs prompt rangers to make the connection between the sons, what happened in the dinner room and its reflection on Stanton’s feminist values. During my visits, the Formal Dining Room held even fewer artifacts than usual.²⁴⁶ Rangers materially focused on the reconstructed fireplace, reinstated wallpaper, servant’s staircase and door which, at one time, led to the kitchen but now opens to the backyard.

In the Family Room and Formal Living Room, the social dimensions emerge based on the role of each room played in bringing bodies together. The four most significant artifacts sit in these rooms. In the Family Room, a piano of uncertain authentic qualities (I explain later), roots the tour in Stanton as a mother who insisted on musically trained children. In the Formal Living Room, the two chairs and writing desk come from the later New York and New Jersey homes. Rangers briefly recount many of the visitors who shared ideas in this space (as the outside exhibit highlights). Rangers refer to the furniture’s history as “tangible connections” to Stanton’s later life, especially as an author using this exact writing desk (though not in Seneca Falls.)

Upstairs, the more personal spaces have no artifacts except photographs and traces built into the environment. In the Nursery rangers explains Stanton’s four younger children, Theodore, Harriet, Margaret and Robert. Rangers explain that the children anchored Stanton in her home which significantly shaped the cooperative relationship she and Anthony forged. There are no clues about the form of Stanton’s baby cradles or rocking chair though rangers assert they were in the Nursery which seems sufficient for rangers and visitors. We step through Stanton’s intimate spaces to become more intimate with “the woman and her times,” as one ranger

²⁴⁶ A plastic artifact encasement which sometimes holds china was empty each time. This is, in part, because of the government shutdown and the imminent winter closing of the Stanton House. The visible omission conveyed a certain “emptiness” to the room not felt the same way in other rooms where exhibit cases either were not present or showed photographs.

remarked in his opening talk. It is presumed that we know her better for moving through the rooms she once did, authentic walking.

In the Master Bedroom, visitors learn more of Stanton's relationship to her husband from whom she gradually grew distant. As one ranger explained, Henry's career was the central focus at the beginning of the relationship but became secondary as Stanton more intimately involved herself in activist work. The bedroom, a cultural symbol of intimacy and privacy, is presented as a site of growing estrangement and change in terms of their respective public roles. From the Masters Bedroom windows, rangers practice similar landscaping techniques to root the site on historic soil. We learn of how different the view would have been in Stanton's time including the relative proximity the Erie Canal now occupies which once was a bustling business section of town.

Throughout the five central spaces, rangers recall narratives based on function and material artifacts. However, these narratives are not a given. The objects and spaces have no inherent meaning. Ranger practices of drawing out "stored memories" in a patterned and consistent sense conveys for the visitor a particular memory. The spaces offer an authentic experience in objective terms. Visitors are reminded of the authenticity of each space when rangers' narratives root history *then* and *there* to *now* and *here*. Narratives both contextualize and constitute memory. I now turn to how objective authenticity is enunciated through my own concepts of the *distantly authentic* and *invisibly authentic*.

The Distantly Authentic

The material trace is the crux of the objectively authentic and precisely what tour guides point out for visitors and about which many visitors inquire. The trace is rhetorically useful in establishing the distantly authentic. I want to differentiate this concept from that of a liquid authenticity. Michael Bowman argues that the Mary Queen of Scots House and Visitor Centre

narrates an oscillation between memory and myth by establishing authenticity while simultaneously suggesting doubt regarding historical record and legend. The museum does not actually try to present resolution but rather invites visitors to “speculate,” “imagine” and “deliberate” and history, as Bowman’s interviews reveal, may take on “liquid properties.”²⁴⁷ WRNHP tours firmly establish the origin story of the women’s rights movement. There is little room for myth especially amidst the detailed attention to, literally, the nuts and bolts of the buildings. Rangers go to great lengths to authenticate the visitor’s experience through narrative, as I have explained earlier,

The WRNHP historic sites appear unfinished projects. Tours invest a surprising amount of time conveying the relative authenticity of matters otherwise minute. The park recently procured several rows of *distantly authentic* pews which strain the “better not to guess” policy. In 1871, the chapel congregation sold the building when they experienced a Methodist/Congregationalist split. The WRNHP purchased one of the congregation’s church pews. Although the park historians are nearly certain these pews did not inhabit the chapel, they are the “next best thing.” It is feasible, the tour highlights, that church members from the original congregation worshiped in those precise pews after the division.

Everything entirely fabricated was done so out of necessity (usually, but not exclusively) for the integrity of the building and visitor safety; especially true in the Chapel where the north and south walls had to be entirely reconstructed to protect the original elements from weather damage. The pews inhabit a kind of authenticity somewhere between real and fabricated. The trace may be faint but it seems to be enough in a poverty of alternatives. However, the level of restoration detail that rangers convey is considerable. I was impressed with how well-versed each

²⁴⁷ Michael Bowman, “Tracing Mary Queen of Scots,” in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 205, 203.

ranger was on the restoration details. After tours, rangers confirmed that a great number of visitors inquire about the authenticity of the structures. In response, rangers take great care to not mislead visitors and the result is often a detailed account the degree of authenticity of things like the roof.

A similar experience is fostered in Stanton's home which cannot boast handicraft but a few artifacts. Beyond those artifacts and a collection of photos of her children under glass (in the Nursery), the home is unremarkable in appearance—a rhetorical dilemma for the park. The walls are covered in reproduction wall paper which the NPS has guessed at based on the layers beneath previous installations. While there is a “paper trail” for this design choice (no receipts of purchase, journal entries or photographs), archeological digging allowed the NPS to roughly remake what once was. One ranger opened a closet door in the Formal Dining Room to show photographs of the layers of wall paper to underline the process which permitted the wallpaper to be reconstructed. Tours are steeped in such careful terms of accuracy and authentication.



Figure 3.4 Image of the Stanton House Formal Dining Room (photograph by the author 2013)

Only four pieces of furniture and none can be said to *certainly* have belonged to Stanton while she lived in Seneca Falls. The three Formal Sitting Room items, a fashionable chair, fainting couch, and desk stand side-by-side, belonged to Stanton post-Seneca Falls. These artifacts are on loan from the family so the distance is related to appropriate timing. Rangers are consistently clear that the items were enjoyed by the family but at a different time and place. The piano, on loan from the Seneca Falls Historical Society, is also distantly authentic though distant in terms of official proof. Guides explain that an oral history trail exists but no “paper trail” or written documentation proves ownership. The NPS is “pretty sure” Stanton taught her children to play on *this* piano. Rangers apologetically express a constrained account of the piano because of strict NPS guidelines. They preform regret presumably because they are unable to give visitors what they (both ranger and visitors) want: a bold “*this was hers*” and “it was hers *here*.” The

fault lies with the NPS. In a complicated sense, the objective authenticity is fulfilled partially. The rangers seem convinced of the artifact's authenticity but not enough of the right kind of evidence exists to warrant the authoritative certification of the NPS. Rangers offer accounts of the four furniture artifacts without visitor prompts.

While museums protect their reputation for authentic materials and experiences, often tour guides will exhibit an excessive honesty about the fissures between original material and that which has been recreated.²⁴⁸ Handler and Gable identified this practice of “rapid masking, unmasking, remasking juxtapositioning” as postmodern.²⁴⁹ And while the layers upon layers of preservation and recreation at Colonial Williamsburg leave considerably more to juxtapose than younger preservation projects like the WRNHP, there is certainly a trend in the NPS of devoting tour time to the politics of what's what and how do we know and do we really even know anyway. Veteran NPS administrator and new Chief of Interpretation at the WRNHP, Kimberly Szewczyk explained that overtime rangers can become focused on these details and deftly relay the nuts and bolts while neglecting not only context but the present day implications of historical events.²⁵⁰ To explain the emphasis on the “invisible landscape” of preservation and recreation, Handler and Gable postulate that first, absolute authenticity may be understood to include the history of the site as it has been and is being preserved and second, as “damage control” or “impression management” to frame the environment as a process. The power of the WRNHP origin story means that “impression management” has specific political implications. Authenticating origin stories gives shape to politics of the lineage as it continues.

The distantly authentic distances the NPS from the ethical weight of complete objective authenticity while still providing some experiential sense to the tours. We are not in front of *the*

²⁴⁸ Handler and Gable consistently noticed this practice at Colonial Williamsburg.

²⁴⁹ Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 57.

²⁵⁰ Personal conversation March 8th 2014.

desk on which Stanton first wrote Anthony but we are in front of *a* desk Stanton *later* used to write Anthony. The bold NPS stamp of authenticity is mediated; image is managed to materially root the women's rights movement in Seneca Falls. If the chapel had no pews, visitors would need to stand throughout the guide's explanation (sometimes as long as 20 minutes and longer with questions.) When the guide explains the heated convention debate, it may be easier to do so from the (seated) vantage point that is the "next best thing." The experience is surely different. Our emotional draw to our history's residue is often a primary reason for traveling to historic sites. The experience is richer among a greater number of artifacts, especially when we can interact with them in an authentic way; we sit as [distant] convention attendees sat. In the WRNHP tours, the distantly authentic highlights an artifact poverty in stark contrast to the rich maps guides express. It seems that the detailed tour narratives respond to visitors' entertainment needs and the inevitable question from a five year old whispered to her sister "where's all her stuff?" It may be because of this poverty that the tours are so frequent and showcase such vivid context, constituting an authenticity through spatial proximity.

The Invisibly Authentic

Across the tours, rangers spend a noticeable amount of time pointing to where things "might have been." The invisible becomes material through a practice of pointing out what is no longer. This practice feeds the same drive for the trace to authenticate the origin story. In the Chapel, guides point to holes or rivets halfway up the height of the walls to indicate there may have been a second floor balcony in which attendees sat. Rangers are, however, careful to explain that no photographic evidence exists to verify the internal makeup of the chapel and, likewise, what little documentation of the external façade does not prove a balcony existed.

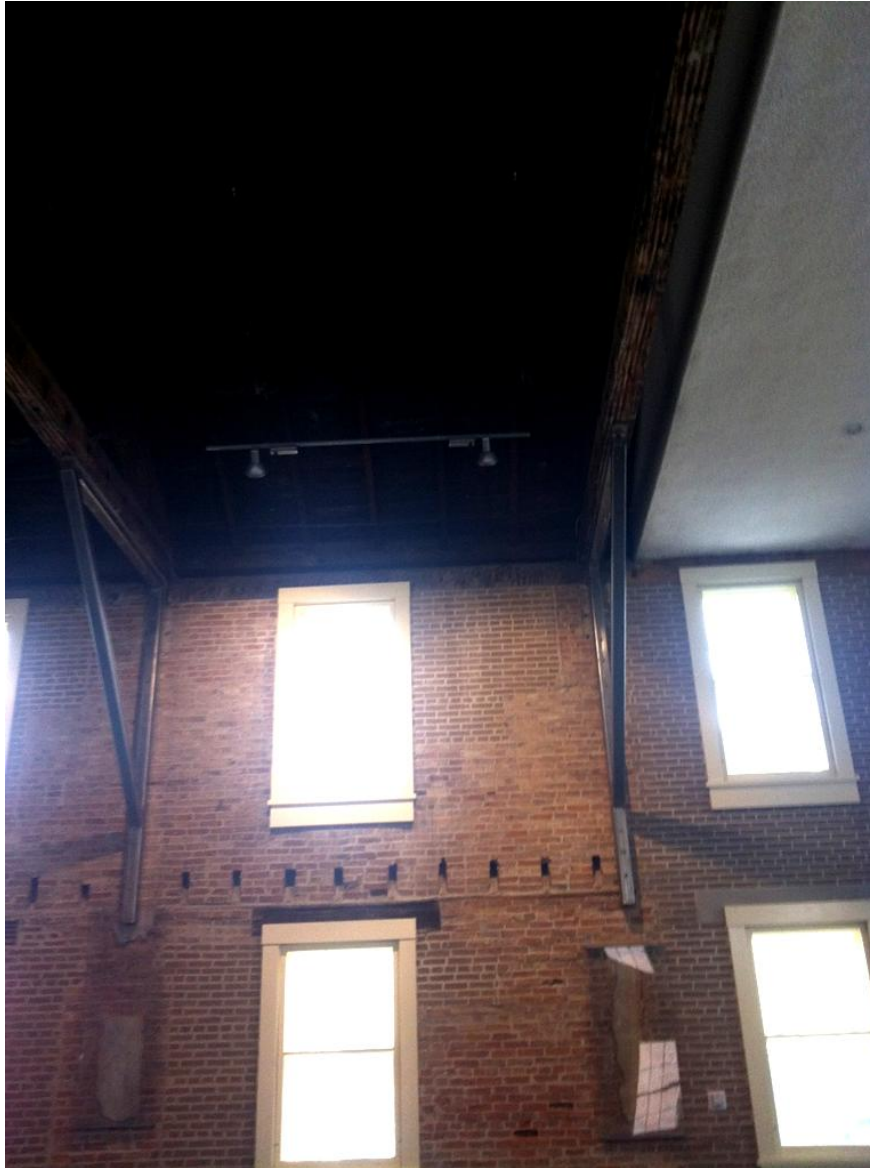


Figure 3.5 Image of the Chapel interior wall and ceiling (courtesy of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park Facebook page)

In the Stanton House, there are cuts in the original floorboards that are evidence of where the original stove pipe to heat the Nursery would have been. Additionally, a much larger cut out indicates, we were told, that Stanton had the stair base rebuilt more elaborately and moved to another part of the house. When one thinks they are going to see Stanton’s Nursery one must imagine more. This is, after all, the feminist activist, mother of seven, who famously told her friend Susan B. Anthony “I will help you with that address if you will hold the baby [Harriet

Stanton Blatch] and make the pudding”²⁵¹ And yet the NPS has no artifacts to the room. Guides build ethos and authenticate their historical narratives by pointing to cuts in the floorboards explaining that something was once there. One small square cut in the Nursery is proof of a stove pipe probably used to heat the room. The ranger “reads” the floor for visitors authenticating stove pipes installations and stairway renovations to elevate the space to the level of objectively authentic.



Figure 3.6 The Stanton House Nursery floorboards (photograph by the author 2013)

The kitchen and Mr. Henry Stanton’s office have since been destroyed but still feature in the tour as well. The doorways that once lead to these important rooms open, now, to the backyard and a closet respectively. At times it seems as though there is more of the missing than

²⁵¹ Clinton, *First Women’s Rights Convention Anniversary*; “Honor Susan B. Anthony, Who Is Ill at Home; Friends Fear Suffragist May Not Leave Her Bed Again,” *The New York Times*, February 21, 1906, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F60615FE3C5A12738DDDA80A94DA405B868CF1D3>.

there is the present. These are the grasps for the trace to authenticate memory, an overly performed objective authenticity that foregrounds not the event's history but the difficulties of preservation and the NPS' strict guidelines.

Conclusion

WRNHP tours introduce visitors to the lives of the men and women who organized the convention, showcase the materials that remain from their lives and connect the events surrounding the Women's Rights Convention with the later articulations and accomplishments of the women's rights movement. The goal of this chapter is to better understand *how* and to do this I moved through the toured spaces, asked questions and interacted with the park as a visitor. Foucault's methodological focus on space and the practices within those spaces as a means to read authenticity as a practice through which knowledge is formed. How tours involve visitors through the site may elucidate the types of knowledge made prominent in these spaces. These practices bear on the park's prized origin story—a story that impacts a larger set of knowledge producing relationships.

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In contrast to the openness of the Visitor Center which encourages a polyphony of interpretations, the historic sites tours hone particular memories. The Chapel tour exemplifies careful memory mapping to illustrate Seneca Falls as an obvious choice for the women's rights

movement's birthing. The activist networks and moral awareness nominated the spot and those involved. The map also *places* visitors on historic soil in terms of particular activist activity. That which is emphasized (i.e. enfranchisement) and that which is omitted (i.e. the women's peace encampment) molds the ideal activist and citizen. The Stanton House exemplified authenticating practices which focused on internal factors such as the narratives sourced from within each room and the materials distantly or invisibly present. Rangers' fixation on the degree of authenticity indicates an objectivist authenticity laden by strict NPS standards. By comparison, the Visitor Center presents a far less structured version of history. Constructivist authenticity that reveals the constitutive tensions of public memory is a more productive mode of authenticity which the historic site tours may employ in the future. An over-reliance on objects and their inherent value as originals speaks to an anxious will to carefully control the memory each site is to officially mean. In the next chapter, I explore the iconoclastic anxiety about the park's origin story and timeline.

Chapter 4

Seeing the Black Lesbian Feminist: Iconophilic Criticism of a Memory Contestation



Figure 4.1 Image of the “Black Lesbian Feminist” in its original position on the east photo wall of the Visitor Center (courtesy of the Women’s Rights National Historical Park Facebook page)

How do you solve a problem like a picture? And when groups contest images, to censor or control mediation, how do we know which ideas undergird disputes? And what does it mean when picture problems seem to resolve themselves? Previous chapters engaged with the political implications of visual and spatial design and the use of space and material to authenticate. In this chapter, I examine a specific artifact in the Visitor Center which served as a stand in for a larger

memory contest earlier in the park's history. Today, that same photograph rarely causes tension. Through Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang's conceptual groundwork of iconophilia in the public sphere I examine the circulation and rhetorical implications of a photo colloquially called the "Black Lesbian Feminist," a photo from the Bettmann archive by the photographer Bettye Lane depicting a protester, Gwenn Craig, at the 1980 Democratic National Convention. I examine the 1995 controversy surrounding the unilateral removal of this highly debated photo housed in the park's Visitor Center. I argue that the anxiety over the image reveals the controversy concerning the "appropriate" memory the WRNHP *ought* to convey about the women's rights movement.

No other image in the Visitor Center to date has been as contested. Yet no scholarship analyzes its reception upon its installment in 1993 and its removal in 1995 by then Women's Rights NHP Superintendant Hanley much less its visual elements. The superintendent responsible for removing the photograph presented a jumbled justification based on exhibit coherence and visitor reception. Due to the authoritative weight of NPS interpretation and the particular public memory that emerges from that work,²⁵² attention to this revision (albeit temporary) matters. This chapter maps the controversy by examining the two contested sides vision for the park and how it ought to be specifically visualized in the Visitor Center. The public memory contest is pronounced on the face of the "Black Lesbian feminist" (henceforth BLF) and is a unique opportunity to examine iconoclasm and the counter-concept, iconophilia.

This chapter adopts the theoretical framework of iconophilia within the vein of public memory politics to examine the concept at the WRNHP. In this sense, I offer a contribution to the recent discussion on the public sphere's relationship to images (and vice versa) and hope to add to the growing discussion on the visual elements of memory. I draw on Roger Aden's reading of narratives and counternarratives concerning the NPS Independence Park in

²⁵² Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism*, 17.

Philadelphia to analyze the clash of narratives in Seneca Falls regarding the park's memory politics. For Independence Park, the established narrative of the park was challenged by community members who demanded a counternarrative projecting what they believed to be a more accurate representation of the site's meaning. This controversy gets at the heart of the park's purpose and has productive similarities to the crisis of purpose at the WRNHP. Memory tension becomes written on the face of Gwenn Craig, the "Black Lesbian Feminist," as invested community members, park rangers and staff, and park visitors make enthemymatic use of what her body means (and is disciplined to mean in the process) in the 1995 GLBTQ political context.

In this chapter, I first explain iconophilia in the context of public sphere theory and offer public memory as an especially helpful arena from which case studies can elucidate the concept. Second, I introduce the specific text and my methodological approach to it which echoes from previous chapters. Third, I outline the circulation of the BLF in four stages: (1) Installation, (2) iconoclasm, (3) covert iconoclasm, and (4) continued circulation. I intend for the case study to provide an illustration of iconophilic practices and insight into memory politics.

Conceptual Framework: Circulation and Memory at a Crossroads Towards Iconophilia

Icons are important tools that allow for a visually based organization of ideas. An image or collection of images can be associated with highly complex concepts that are central to identity-making processes. Direct attacks on visual symbols, known as iconoclasm, serve as methods of attacking the ideas they represent at the time. When accounting for the origins of iconophobia and its active expression known as iconoclasm, Manghani et. al explain that it is evident in ancient texts like those religious writings that describe the destruction of graven images. Plato, too, famously expressed a deep mistrust of images.²⁵³ W. J. T. Mitchell explains that the iconoclast sees in images "folly and vice, epistemological error and moral depravity." The

²⁵³ Sunil Manghani, Arthur Piper, and Jon Simons, eds., *Images: A Reader* (London ; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2006), 21.

offending image not only poses a threat to the “naïve” idolater but also to the iconoclast thus providing the accuser a rationale for censorship.²⁵⁴

Iconoclasm’s opposite, as W.J.T. Mitchell and Bruno Latour each explain, is iconophilia. In an article that attempts to soften one dimension of the antagonism between religion and science, Latour provocatively offers a “mediation on mediation” that asks why science’s iconophilic relations to images in graphs, charts and other research images must entail an iconoclastic relationship to religious imagery. For Latour, the binary goes beyond a hate/love but encompasses a “respect... for the movement of the image.”²⁵⁵ Where the iconoclast will “freeze-frame,” or reify, the particular image (or all images), the iconophile embraces the image in its multiple rhetorical contexts and remediations as it exists in “the movement, the passage, the transition from one form of image to another.”²⁵⁶ Iconophilia cannot be partially applied.

[MORE EXPLANATION ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO FREEZE-FRAME]

Because it seems so difficult to resist the temptation inherent in all images, that is, to freeze-frame them, the iconoclast dreams of an unmediated access to truth, of a complete absence of images. But if we follow the path of iconophilia, we should, on the contrary, pay even more respect to the series of transformations for which each image is only a provisional frame. In other words, we should be iconophilic in all domains at once, in art, in science and in religion.²⁵⁷

Latour, like Mitchell, calls for an important reorientation to the visual realm. The approach melds well with the recent theories on rhetorical criticism that have broadened and at times destabilized the definition of text, reader, meaning and the historically privileged status of discursive communication. Critics increasingly respect and work to account for the dynamic qualities that culminate in the rhetorical event, strategy, etc. The push for a more rhetorical

²⁵⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 197.

²⁵⁵ Bruno Latour, “How to Be Iconophilic in Art, Science, and Religion?,” in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A Jones, Peter Galison, and Amy E Slaton (New York: Routledge, 1998), 421.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

approach to visual culture, as Finnegan and Kang point out, is one important element of “challenging what we call properly rhetorical.”²⁵⁸ And although some critics challenge the inclusion of the visual in the public sphere, especially specific theorists’ iterations of the theory,²⁵⁹ the case has been well made that a purely discursive model based on singular conceptions of rationality cannot account for the way images influence publics and mobilize ideas.²⁶⁰

In their article “‘Sighting’ the Public,” Finnegan and Kang layout a framework for an alternative theoretical approach to the public sphere which focuses in on the visual. Their ultimate goal is to champion a “less iconoclastic, and more iconophilic” perspective.²⁶¹ “We must,” they argue, “apprentice ourselves to vision.”²⁶² Relying heavily on W. J. T. Mitchell’s development of “modern iconoclasm” which includes the iconoclast’s efforts to stigmatize the offending image and later impose a valorized substitute.²⁶³ As they analyze John Dewey’s and Jürgen Habermas’s mixed characterization of images’ ideal roles in publics, Finnegan and Kang offer a new theoretical framework for understanding types of iconoclasm: gross and subtle. Gross iconoclasm is the totalizing anxiety and mistrust of all images while subtle iconoclasm follows the selective pattern of Mitchell’s modern iconoclasm.²⁶⁴ They argue that elements of public sphere theory have been denounced for their gross iconoclastic attributes but complicate those critiques by arguing that Dewey’s and Habermas’s theories exhibit tension as they each champion a subtle iconoclastic relationship to images. At times, Dewey and Habermas are

²⁵⁸ Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, “‘Sighting’ the Public,” 379.

²⁵⁹ Alan G. Gross, “The Public Sphere and Rhetorical Criticism: A Cautionary Tale,” *Argumentation & Advocacy* 49, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 141–44.

²⁶⁰ Kevin Michael DeLuca, “Practicing Rhetoric Beyond the Dangerous Dreams of Deliberative Democracy: Engaging a World of Violence and Public Screens,” *Argumentation & Advocacy* 49, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 230–31; Jiyeon Kang and Cara A. Finnegan, “Gross Iconoclasm,” *Argumentation & Advocacy* 49, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 228–30.

²⁶¹ Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, “‘Sighting’ the Public,” 379.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 385.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 382.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 380.

anxious about vision's influence on deliberation as a whole which would be gross iconoclasm. At others they theorize idealized ways of reading images, an "attempt to control or guide the practice of seeing" for Dewey and for Habermas a disciplining of images into the logic of rationality.²⁶⁵ Both privilege the discursive model and would force analysis of images to flatten the unique dimensions vision introduces into publics. For the purposes of this paper, I refer to subtle iconoclasm which has the same destructive relationship to particular images though an actively affirming attitude towards others.

The shift to a focus on dissemination in mass media has helped develop these concepts. However, Finnegan and Kang trouble the "public screen" theory from Kevin DeLuca and Peebles which installs an unnecessary distinction between producer and consumer in their explanation of the move from "a culture of reading to a culture of spectatorship."²⁶⁶ A focus on *circulation*, a theory developed by Michael Warner, is what Finnegan and Kang argue will foster iconophilia. For Finnegan and Kang, circulation is more than the transmission of images from one site or public to another. It is a "constitutive process," a "cultural process," which has a *reflexive* or meta-awareness which "enables the formation of public discourses and the emergence of publics."²⁶⁷ Discourse [and images] circulate along networks thus creating publics. One is more aware of publics when more versions of images in common either as viewers, producers or, more likely, as both. Moving beyond Warner's still discursively invested iteration, Finnegan and Kang supplement with Latour's emphasis on interaction with and recognition of the image's history of movement. This approach "liberates us from the need to see images as true or false."²⁶⁸ Thus

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 385, 389.

²⁶⁶ Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peebles, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' of Seattle," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (June 2002): 131.

²⁶⁷ Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, "'Sighting' the Public," 393, 394.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 395.

circulation constitutes the image but more importantly it summons publics as they compose meaning from transformations and history.

Finnegan and Kang help critics “sight” the possibility of an iconophilic relationship to images as they circulate and because of that movement. The process of visual rhetoric criticism, which is especially conscious of the specific rhetorical implications in the multiple phases of circulation, is the best illustration of the concept. Finnegan exemplifies the process in her work on the earliest portrait of Abraham Lincoln. She demonstrates what previous scholars have argued for and that is that “we should neither ignore an era's visual culture nor assume that we know what it is.”²⁶⁹ In excavating the portrait's visual rhetoric within the rhetorical context of its publication, Finnegan demonstrates how attention to image vernaculars can reveal the circulating mythos and patterns of visibility of a particular time. Accordingly, image vernaculars “are the enthymematic modes of reasoning employed by audiences in the context of specific practices of reading and viewing in visual cultures.”²⁷⁰ Visual habits will seem “natural” amidst the circulation of practices and a critic can analyze the assumptions that promote such enthymematic reasoning while being particular enough to analyze the specific influence of individuals amidst practices:

As ways of talking about images that utilize the inventional resources of particular visual cultures, image vernaculars are tacit topoi of argument that viewers employ creatively in specific rhetorical situations. Unlike some conceptions of visual culture that suggest our experience of the visual realm is determined by the overwhelming force of ideology, the concept of image vernaculars preserves a necessary space for agency by theorizing the ways that viewers mobilize images as inventional resources for argument. The critic studying image vernaculars thus avoids the extremes of either assuming that people's responses to images are, on the one hand, merely eccentric, or, on the other hand, an inevitable product of ideology that leaves no room for the agency of rhetorical actors. Image vernaculars make available a fruitful middle space for critical engagement.

²⁶⁹ Finnegan, “Recognizing Lincoln,” 33.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

The concept allows for more complicated judgments about images which are morphed and morphing as they circulate.

In putting public sphere theory and circulation side by side to encourage iconophilia, critics now have a strong justification for taking the visual *in movement* more seriously. This chapter is not focused on correcting or checking Finnegan and Kang's treatment of public sphere theorists. Rather, I work from the premise that the real and theoretical relationship between images and publics is troubled as it stands now. I agree with Latour, Finnegan and Kang that a healthier and bigger picture reading of visuality's role in communication between citizens can be improved with a healthier respect for how an image operates in changing settings and meaning states. The work to date has peaked interest in the field and can become richer with more critical analysis of the political implications of visual habits and memory. This chapter further tests the concept of images in circulation by mapping the circulation of a particular image and analyzing its role in a public memory contest.

I offer that public memory is an insightful approach to circulation and access point to iconophilia because it activates a particular dimension of circulation. Circulation is flowing reflexivity of images and while memory is continually confused for a full and objective representation of the past it is in a constant state of transformation as well. Memory moves around and alongside circulated images as each are informed by the other and in many cases not even distinct from each other. As Anne Demo and Bradford Vivian explain, "images powerfully invoke memory" while at the same time "memory is profoundly informed by visual media."²⁷¹ Public memory is a mediation of the visual just as the visual mediates memory. They frame each

²⁷¹ Bradford Vivian and Anne Teresa Demo, "Introduction," in *Rhetoric, Remembrance, and Visual Form: Sighting Memory*, ed. Anne Teresa Demo and Bradford Vivian, Routledge Studies in Rhetoric and Communication 5 (New York: Routledge, 2011), 6.

other and considerably affect influence. While the image itself can move materially from platform to platform and be remediated in obvious ways it is also the case that the transformation is not of the image per se but the surrounding publics and public memory contexts.

Inherently, analysis of image vernaculars draws out memory politics. Finnegan's essay demonstrates a careful and multi-modal criticism in her work on image vernaculars employed by those first to see Abraham Lincoln's earliest photograph portrait. She carefully situates the image, its reception, the mediated forms it appears in and the cultural climate to better explain its role in the public sphere. Thirty years after his assassination, letters about the Lincoln photograph reveal the "Lincoln who fit [19th Century audiences] unique needs and interests" based on how they "activated the image in their own present."²⁷² Careful attention to vision's role in the memory of Lincoln, as Finnegan demonstrates, moves critics closer to a workable concept of iconophilia precisely because a holistic examination is underway rather than a judgment rendered frozen in time and untenable as that precise time and context is gone forever. In a recent case study that has important insight for circulation and memory, Mazyar Lotfalian challenges the capacity of circulation as a concept to account for "aestheticized forms of political expressions."²⁷³ He is especially focused on those who draw from historical imagery and circulate in the "ecology of new media."²⁷⁴ Without naming memory, Lotfalian analyzes the rhetorical and visual use of history and complicates the usually binary approach to official and vernacular memory. The political needs of disenfranchised Iranians find resource in visual memories of Persian history by recalling recognizable tropes and melding them with icons of the Green Revolution. He argues that when remediations of the Iranian Green Revolution images

²⁷² Finnegan, "Recognizing Lincoln," 39,40.

²⁷³ Mazyar Lotfalian, "Aestheticized Politics, Visual Culture, and Emergent Forms of Digital Practice," *International Journal of Communication* 7 (January 2013): 1372.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1387.

move from the street to the internet then circulation and production “merge.”²⁷⁵ Those circulating are also memory shapers by drawing critical connections between historical heroism and pride and the activists of 2009 and 2010. These critics give attention to how memory is *seen* as it is constructed and constituting visually.

Memory contests concerning NPS holdings are especially instructive. These parks and monuments include many of the nationalistic iconic images that are constantly disseminated and circulating. Teresa Bergman accounts, in part, for memory contests over the Lincoln Memorial, the USS Arizona and Mt Rushmore are excellent examples of NPS sites with significant symbolic currency and the memory contests that ensue.²⁷⁶ For this chapter, I rely on Roger Aden’s insight regarding the recent NPS Independence Park narrative and counternarrative clashes. His attention to NPS narrative is helpful in analyzing why the discourse about the Black Lesbian Feminist swiftly evolved from the specifics of the photo to the very story the park did or did not privilege. For Aden, the dominant narrative of Independence Park, which commemorates many Philadelphia-related trappings of America’s founding, is challenged by a community critique that calls for a counternarrative. It is important to note that the beginning similarity between Independence Park and the WRNHP is that both grapple with “foundation narratives” which Aden highlights as a unique and central part of the Independence Park narrative clash. In other words, how the story’s origins are visualized informs later iterations. Amidst scrutiny of the singularly celebratory narrative already established by the park, emerged a counternarrative that amends the celebratory narrative to also relay an imperfect past to visitors.

Aden highlights the rhetorical battle over memory and national narrative evident in the NPS’s reluctance towards recognizing and telling the “whole” story of George Washington’s

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 1377.

²⁷⁶ Bergman, *Exhibiting Patriotism*.

nine illegally owned slaves. Visitors are informed of Washington's "servants" rather than his slaves. However, to integrate this part of the story threatens the already established "Cradle of Liberty" part this park plays in Democratic America's plotline. The battle is not over whether Washington owned slaves but over what should be done with that information – how it should be represented and how it should weigh in on the narrative told of America's founding? The narrative of Independence Park as a "celebratory representative ideograph of the nation's founding" site is disrupted by the counternarrative push that "Liberty has been incompletely enacted."²⁷⁷ It conflicts with the story that our founders had a love for equality, freedom and liberty. Aden asks, "Is Independence national historic park the cradle of liberty or something more complicated –seemingly less palatable? The answer, sorted out over years of rhetorical wrangling, would determine what stories were told at Independence Park as well as how both the park and ourselves were to be defined."²⁷⁸ The problematization of the NPS's tendency towards pristine storytelling is echoed in many of the concerns about the role and purpose of the WRNHP.

The BLF photograph has little literal movement and is rarely literally seen on new platforms. Rather, I want to account for how the still photograph transforms and is transforming amidst the fluctuating political and social backdrop. It circulates through the memory contest in news coverage, institutional documents and internal NPS correspondence, and activist media. Though actually it is hard to say which circulates which. Anxiety over the specific photo has waxed and waned and I argue that this is in part because of the sea of public memory contests in which the park is involved in varying levels throughout time.

²⁷⁷ Aden, Roger. "Redefining the 'Cradle of Liberty'" 83.

²⁷⁸ Aden, "Redefining the 'Cradle of Liberty,'" 79.

Methodology

My methodological approach relies on the rhetorical field methods described in earlier chapters.

In this case though, I involve my own vision intimately to convey a material encounter with the photograph in its immediate surroundings. I rely on the justification Phaedra Pezzullo offers in her work on “pinkwashing” and the Toxic Links Coalition’s tours that seek to make visible the breast cancer causes from big business carcinogens that are otherwise glossed over. She engages with public sphere theory to challenge the overly simplistic binaries of publics and counterpublics and to “foreground the non-verbal activities that are involved in negotiating public life, including physical, visual, emotional, and aural dimensions.”²⁷⁹ Participant observation, she demonstrates, reveals more about the performances of publics and counterpublics. She also argues that public sphere scholars have an interest in the embodied critical approach because 1) it can access the unmentionable or mis-translated if present at all in writing and 2) critics can examine marginalized experiences deemed too unimportant to record or to make accessible.²⁸⁰

In this chapter, I utilize published materials and internal NPS archival resources like past-Superintendent interviews. In addition, I want to account for how my body sees and experiences the visual scene. I read the visual elements in and around the photograph in a fashion that does not freeze-frame but rather conveys those characteristics that also circulate and may be emphasized or de-emphasized in subsequent remediations. In other words, the photograph is not static but analysis requires a general reading for those influential and circulating elements yet unwritten or never to be documented can be examined.

²⁷⁹ Pezzullo, “Resisting ‘National Breast Cancer Awareness Month’: The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and Their Cultural Performances,” 205.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 207–208.

Context: Stage Set for Controversy

In this section, I highlight the park's vaguely defined purpose and then layout the social and political landscape in which the park is politically located. Tensions regarding homosexuality and radical feminism lent to the clash over the park's role and purview. Ultimately, anxiety revolved around who would be included in the park's narrative and who that would inherently exclude. Richard Handler and Eric Gable, in *The New History in an Old Museum*, document the influence on the new social history of the 1960s and 1970s on the curation and public programming at Colonial Williamsburg. The more socially dependent and constructivist approach "wanted to encourage... audiences to think critically about the relationship of present-day politics and culture to the histories they were hearing, reading or seeing."²⁸¹ Vivien Rose, an NPS public servant who has served the WRNHP since before its opening and had significant influence on the design of the Visitor Center, explained that the park was developed as social history as a mode of preservation was "on the rise." Thus "this park is different in many respects from other parks that are created at the same time about women that are focused on one person."²⁸² Though the new social history approach was developing, the philosophical and pedagogical transition at the WRNHP was anything but smooth.

The imprecise language of NPS documents has created a mire of conflicting and vague statements of purpose the park is held to. Founded in 1916 by the Organic Act, the NPS was first proposed to administer over Yellowstone National Park and now oversees a complex network of natural, historical and cultural sites. The Organic Act describes the service's purpose as to:

...promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations ... to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such

²⁸¹ Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*, 4–5.

²⁸² Conard and Smith, "Vivien Rose," 21.

*manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*²⁸³

The vague concepts highlighted in this legislated purpose such as “promote,” “regulate,” “conserve,” and “for the enjoyment of future generations” leave space for varied readings. The NPS is idealized as an apolitical, objective organization meant to pinpoint the important natural and cultural jewels of the American people and preserve them as they were/are for posterity’s sake.²⁸⁴ That the selection and preservation process is political should be clear to rhetorical and history scholars who understand the competing narratives embedded in the very soil of each site. Internal NPS documents in 1985 recognize the necessity to develop the park’s interpretive mode, “the overall theme of the park, as identified in the legislation, needs to be elaborated, and relevant subthemes need to be defined.”²⁸⁵ Later documents, as my analysis shows, attempted to direct the park politically with more specific language.

Early park designers advocated a park design that included multiple historic sites amidst shrinking NPS budgets. Low budgets made acquiring and renovating exclusively the Chapel appear a more politically and economically feasible.²⁸⁶ Once funds were secured for the Stanton House and Chapel, the central interpretative dilemma concerned the park’s timeline. Proponents of a shorter timeline, that would cut out later iterations of the women’s movement, set their sights on a particular visualization of the past. In essence, how long was the park’s story? At the WRNHP, to control the interpretative timeline was not only to measure the convention’s impact but to also influence how the women’s rights movement was portrayed. Ultimately, the park’s

²⁸³ Organic Act, 1916 as read through nps.gov

²⁸⁴ We simply do not see the same media attention given to the politics of the Director of the NPS as we do the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, for example.

²⁸⁵ *General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment: Women’s Rights National Historical Park, New York. Draft.* (New York: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1985), 5.

²⁸⁶ Conard, “‘All Men and Women Are Created Equal’: An Administrative History of Women’s Rights National Historical Park,” 41–48.

narrative hung on the timeline. Clash arises when the timeline must be firmly outlined to develop themes of interpretation. Park designers must ask, when did the influence of the first convention cease *if* it ever did? Whatever the answer, it highlights the common thread throughout time and shapes the park's public memory narrative.

The event itself and its immediate historical context in Seneca County is inarguably important to interpret in the strictest sense. After all, these historical elements are what roots the park in Seneca Falls and Waterloo. The 2012 National Register contextualizes the park's material resources in terms of those sites related to the event and the event's organizers. Based on this document's detail, the park must, *at least*, tell the story of the movement in Seneca Falls from 1847 through 1862—the years Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her family lived in Seneca Falls.²⁸⁷ At the same time, the park's National Register suggests a broader interpretative time span, “However, the 1848 event and the Declaration of Sentiments continued to influence early women's rights reformers through the Civil War and later.”²⁸⁸ Amid a vague mandate and an unclear timeline, the socio-political context of the women's rights movement of the 1980s are vital elements when trying to understand how the park's public memory took shape.

The feminist movement, with its roots in early 1800s social reform and religious work,²⁸⁹ and more specifically suffragists were “out of step with the rest of America”²⁹⁰ with gradual legislative and social victories. The movement splintered as Stanton and Anthony's uncompromising position on suffrage and alignment with racist suffrage advocates proved

²⁸⁷ The national register also outlines 1915-1927 as significant because it was at this time that the building which houses the Visitor Center was built and developed.

²⁸⁸ “Women's Rights National Historical Park,” National Register of Historic Places Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1978. 47

²⁸⁹ O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave*, 5.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

untenable for a large portion of the movement.²⁹¹ Internal disunity grew and continued through the women's rights movement timeline including disagreements over pornography, motherhood, sexuality, class, race and culture; such fissures are well documented and still visible today in pop culture debates. Betty Friedan, founder of National Organization for Women (NOW) and famous author of influential *The Feminine Mystique*, infamously put a name to what she believed to be a dangerous, undercutting force within the movement, the lesbian "Lavender Menace."²⁹² Activists even past the 1990s continued to struggle for a unifying feminist platform which would acknowledge a diversity of lifestyles and approaches.²⁹³ Amid the clash and diversity of in-movement perspectives, women's issues have been a discordant front on which advocates have had to wage campaigns against, not only, inequality but also the general public's misconceptions of women and feminism. The hard fought battle over the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), first introduced by Alice Paul in 1923 continued as a tenuous line in the 1970s and early 1980s where conservative national leaders (Phyllis Schlafly was especially effective among them) demonized the women's rights efforts and steeped their criticisms in deeply stringent sexism and potent homophobia.²⁹⁴

This project already outlines some of the social movement memory problems. I need to briefly situate the 1995 WRNHP censorship in the political reality facing GLBTQ activists (like Gwenn Craig) at the time, however, I am keenly aware that the histories are coupled with some

²⁹¹ Ibid., 18.

²⁹² Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center (New York, N.Y.) and National Museum & Archive of Lesbian and Gay History (U.S.), *The Gay Almanac*, Berkley trade pbk. ed (New York: Berkley Books, 1996), 19.

²⁹³ hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*; Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, "Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future (2000)," in *The Essential Feminist Reader*, ed. Estelle B. Freedman, 1st ed (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 424–26.

²⁹⁴ John Gallagher and Chris Bull, *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990s*, 1st ed (New York: Crown Publishers, 1996), 10–13, 17.

measure of forgetting²⁹⁵ and problematic universalizing especially because of White and patriarchal privilege.²⁹⁶ What is important for the purpose of understanding the political currency of the BLF photograph and the uproar of its censorship is the battle lines already drawn between the conservative religious right and gay and lesbian communities. In legislative campaigns and loud protests, theirs was a battle over cultural perceptions and state protections of the “non-conforming body.”

A swelling of resistance against homophobic discrimination in the late 1960s pronounced itself loudly in the violence of the Stonewall riot of 1969, which historian Daniel Rivers argues, among others,²⁹⁷ served as the “symbolic center around which this new gay liberation movement took shape.”²⁹⁸ He explains that the movement focused on visibility politics, engendering pride, normalizing same-sex relations amidst the rhetoric of disease and stigma that abounded. In 1970, the newly founded Gay Community Services Center organized New York City’s first gay pride parade, an important factor of gay and lesbian visibility (although not in equal measures.)

In terms of organized and visible political initiatives, communities and activists affected by homophobia drew together formidable resources and communal rage in response to the US government’s neglect of the AIDS crisis and the 1986 Supreme Court decision *Bowers v. Hardwick*. The event moved many who had previously been inactive into street demonstrations for better protection from sodomy laws. Deborah B. Gould argues that the court decision produced a “moral shock” and helped fashion a new militancy prodded on by the Silence =

²⁹⁵ Christopher Castiglia, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

²⁹⁶ Marlon Ross, “Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm,” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 161–89; Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 1st ed (Watertown, Mass: Persephone Press, 1981).

²⁹⁷ Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (October 2006): 724–51.

²⁹⁸ Daniel Winunwe Rivers, *Radical Relations: Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children in the United States since World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 114.

Death Project and Lavender Hill Mob which laid important groundwork for the creation of ACT UP in 1987.²⁹⁹ By 1989 there were more than 100,000 AIDS related deaths with a growing stigma that to be gay or lesbian was to be infected.³⁰⁰

Explanations of the mid-1980s political landscape highlight a staunch divide between the increasingly powerful factions of the religious right and the gay and lesbian left that had been building since the end of World War II.³⁰¹ The right enjoyed more control over the rules of the engagement and values at stake and such influence stretched into the 1990s as well. In the late 1970s, the pronounced influence of Anita Bryant, Jerry Falwell, and John Briggs continued to focus religious right efforts on associating liberal-leaning social reform with the danger of gays and lesbians attacking family values and children. Journalists John Gallagher and Chris Bull argue that the conservative right relied heavily on sweeping accusations and provocative claims to fund their successful and growing political and social sway.³⁰² By 1992, a well-entrenched “culture war” was underway where the conservative right was not only better organized and grassroots rooted but seemed to have gay activists on the back foot in terms of a clear agenda and effective apparatus.³⁰³ In the early 1990s, children’s books were published to reflect the family diversity that gay and lesbian parents more significantly forged but were met with hot hostility and new attempts at passing homophobic legislation in several states.³⁰⁴ In 1993, no state protected same-sex marriage, most court interpretation of state laws had already permitted the

²⁹⁹ Deborah B Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP’s Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 121–143.

³⁰⁰ Larry P. Gross, *Contested Closets: The Politics and Ethics of Outing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 39.

³⁰¹ John Gallagher and Chris Bull, *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990s*, 1st ed (New York: Crown Publishers, 1996); D’Emilio, “Hidden from History.”

³⁰² *Ibid.*, xi, 2, 7.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 38; Becki Ross, *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 231. Ross’ work largely analyzes Canadian lesbian communities but references the lack of clear direction across American and Canadian gay and lesbian activist communities.

³⁰⁴ Rivers, *Radical Relations*, 204.

removal of children from gay and lesbian homes and employment termination of gays and lesbians who came out of the closet. Violence against gays and lesbians remained a real threat.

In 1992, Bill Clinton won the White House in part because of his sympathy for AIDS victims and pledges to fight discrimination in the military. It seemed an important step towards legislative change. Linda Hirshman's extensive interviews with activists involved with Clinton at the time lead her to pronounce that gay activists were meaningfully part of Clinton's success "until they weren't."³⁰⁵ Attempts to eradicate discrimination in the military were "almost a perfect political disaster"³⁰⁶ for those activists who were unprepared for a persuasive and forceful right. Clinton all but abandoned his promises in 1993 when he signed Don't Ask/Don't Tell which did not protect women from "lesbian baiting" nor keep "witch hunts". The 1994 midterm elections handed control of Congress over to the Republican Party who continued to reinforce "traditional family values" in a narrow, religious sense.

Even while the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act protected discriminatory definitions of family, the number of openly gay or lesbian candidates serving in government (local, state and federal) more than doubled from 1991 to 1997 to a number of 127.³⁰⁷ Writing in 1995, Becki Ross claims that "the majority of lesbians (and gay men) continue to live double lives" though she projected "greater numbers will come out in the 1990s, buoyed up by a splendid twenty-five-year legacy of activism and the tenacity of lesbian and lesbian/gay/queer institutions intent on realizing greater visibility, dignity, and equality in the future."³⁰⁸ But this is a difficult matter. Beyond the legal barriers, Linnea Due movingly recounts how traumatic the 1990s search for the "gay gene" proved for gay and lesbian communities. Conservative rhetoric, which

³⁰⁵ Linda R. Hirshman, *Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution*, 1st ed (New York: Harper, 2012), 221–230.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

³⁰⁷ Vicki Lynn Eaklor, *Queer America: A GLBT History of the 20th Century* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2008), 211–213.

³⁰⁸ Ross, *The House That Jill Built*, 222.

“criminalize[d] difference,” suggested that, with the essentializing science in hand, abortion would take on a radically different moral significance.³⁰⁹ For many, the preferred gay or lesbian body was either invisible, deservingly diseased as a moral hazard to others or non-existent.

Just as iterations of the women’s movement suffered disunity, so also did the GLBTQ communities. Brett C. Stockdill explains this tendency, what he calls “one-dimensional oppositional consciousness,” within movements to resist one type of oppression while other forms are re-entrenched by the movement’s strategies and focus.³¹⁰ Though insightful interviews, he argues AIDS activist groups were certainly fraught with male white privilege. Many experienced homophobia in their cultural communities but racism, classism and sexism in the largely white gay activist communities like ACT UP.³¹¹ Lesbian activists felt especially ignored in HIV/AIDS activism as most research either excluded women or only accounted for women when pregnant. They accused male activists of sexism in their efforts to cure their own bodies at the cost of women’s and of ignoring their leadership and unique struggles. Many activists gainfully connected homophobia with issues of race, sex and class (among others), refusing to have themselves segmented.³¹² Notably, at the 1980 Democratic National Convention, Melvin Boozer explained, “I know what it means to be called a nigger, and I know what it means to be called a faggot, and I can sum up the difference in one word: none.”³¹³ However, fissures continued either willfully or, at least in part, due to ignorance. In working toward a

³⁰⁹ Linnea A. Due, *Joining the Tribe: Growing Up Gay & Lesbian in the '90s*, 1st Anchor Books ed (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 255–258.

³¹⁰ Brett C. Stockdill, “Forging a Multidimensional Oppositional Consciousness: Lessons from Community-Based AIDS Activism,” in *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest*, ed. Jane J. Mansbridge and Aldon Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 207.

³¹¹ Deborah B Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP’s Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³¹² Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*.

³¹³ Richard Pearson, “Homosexual Rights Activist Melvin Boozer Dies at 41,” *The Washington Post*, March 10, 1987.

conceptualization of “queer” and “queer theory,” Teresa de Lauretis recognizes the chasms of understanding between identity groups:

The fact of the matter is, most of us, lesbians and gay men, do not know much about one another’s sexual history, experience, fantasies, desire or modes of theorizing. And we do not know enough about ourselves, as well, when it comes to differences between and within lesbians, and between and within gay men, in relation to race and its attendant differences of class or ethnic culture, generational, geographical, and socio-political location... Thus an equally troubling question in the burgeoning field of “gay and lesbian studies” concerns the discursive constructions and constructed silences around the relations of race to identity and subjectivity in the practices of homosexualities and the representations of same-sex desire.³¹⁴

For the Women’s Rights NHP to install one ultra-visible, proud lesbian seems a miracle given the political climate. Given the social division prior to the park’s establishment, park designers certainly took into account the correlation many residents made between feminism and lesbianism. The NPS ethnographic study explains that:

...although the history... that the park interprets is not specifically about the history of sexuality..., many park neighbors report not being able to separate the nascent feminist history the park interprets with the perceived sexuality of the women who have been associated with feminism and/or the park since 1848.³¹⁵

Locally specific tension can be traced back to the 1983 Women’s Peace Encampment established in Romulus, New York in protest of the Seneca Army Depot which purportedly stored nuclear arms and waste. The encampment’s demonstrations in Waterloo and Seneca Falls and internal rules privileged lesbian identities and lifestyles. Louise Krasniewicz’s ethnographic study of the controversy spells out how influential the encampment controversy was in the local communities which were often incensed by the protestors and their attempts to associate the anti-patriarchy

³¹⁴ Teresa de Lauretis, “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991): viii.

³¹⁵ Miller, Greenwald, and Vogel, *Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, Women’s Rights National Historical Park*, 149.

and anti-war cause with the Seneca County's history.³¹⁶ Publics unable or unwilling to distinguish between the two histories posed a difficult audience for the park planners to adapt for. The encampment's influence is evident in an interview conducted by Rebecca Conard with Superintendent Canzanelli. The NPS Administrative History author references documentation from a November 1983 Advisory Meeting that quickly highlighted the park's vague commission. According to Conard, a dichotomy emerged:

This discussion that took place...boils down to two sides. One really hinged on the perception of the public, whether they wanted the park to really focus on current political issues . . . or whether it was really to focus on the history, the 1848 [convention]. 1920 becomes, in this discussion, a real focal point for how far [past 1848] to take it [interpretation], and how to deal with that? From the park's standpoint, to what degree can the park actually become involved with political issues—having to respond to politicians and being dependent on Congress for appropriations, how political could the park afford to be?³¹⁷

A “political” park was dangerous but especially so was one that referenced the unpopular politics many from the Women's Peace Encampment laid claim.

In a 1991 speech, the past executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Urvashi Vaid, reminded the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta, Georgia that “to be lesbian is to have, until very recently, absolutely no images in mainstream culture of out, proud, powerful, strong, independent women.”³¹⁸ Vaid's words are two years prior to the Visitor Center's opening and four years before the controversy. Though media was gradually providing fairer news coverage of gay and lesbian issues and lives, the US government was still dragging its feet on community support and legal protection, not to mention helping present a positive image. Aden's work analyzes a nationalistic narrative disrupted by an outside force, the

³¹⁶ Krasniewicz, *Nuclear Summer*.

³¹⁷ Conard and Smith, “Linda Canzenelli,” 9.

³¹⁸ Urvashi Vaid, “Let's Put Our House In Order,” in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York: Routledge, 1997), 799.

community's counternarrative, meant to compel the park to revise the story and thus change the visible premise of the nation's founding: imperfect democracy. The Seneca Falls park installed a challenging, complicated narrative at its inception. Influenced by community pressure, internal disagreement/anxiety tried to discipline the "lesbian" out.

The elevation of the BLF photograph to the object of iconoclasm can certainly be attributed to the sexual politics Gwenn Craig's "outness" communicates. In addition, the photograph's emphasis on race can also prove controversial. As explained in the earlier chapter, the history of the women's rights movement is pockmarked with racism and classism where one is decried disloyal to the movement if those oppressions are brought to the table. While my analysis *sees* race in and around the photograph, racial diversity is seen throughout the Visitor Center and objections never specifically mentioned race.

Analysis of Circulation

What follows is a four-part analysis that traces major movements in the photograph's history. In the first section, I analyze Superintendent Linda Canzanelli and Ranger Vivien Rose's recent interviews as they reflect on their roles in designing the Visitor Center exhibits. Additionally, I read the visual elements of the exhibit space that the photograph inhabits. No changes have been made to this exact scene since it was first stalled. The second section focuses on the iconoclast, Superintendent Joanne Hanley, action and the circulation of the image in the news, and among NPS staff and activists. In the third section, I develop the idea of covert iconophobia by outlining the anxiety evident in the NPS studies that followed. Last, I gesture towards the continued movement of the image. As the image literally, figuratively or representatively moves and transforms so also do the public memory narratives.

Installation Context (1993) Visually Read in 2013-2014

The WRNHP is responsible for an especially difficult history for interpretation with vague government guidance. The Visitor Center visual and spatial design invokes undoubtedly provocative questions. The design materially translates the vague Congressional language which established the park, language that is widely understood by rangers and park staff to be vague.³¹⁹

Congress charged the park with the responsibility to:

... to preserve and interpret for the education, inspiration, and benefit of present and future generations the nationally significant historical and cultural sites and structures associated with the struggle for equal rights for women and to cooperate with State and local entities to preserve the character and historic setting of such sites and structures.³²⁰

This is the entirety of the ideological direction Congress provided. As a result, much is left up to the park staff in charge. The scope and exact characteristics of this commission have been hotly contested since. In an Administrative History interview, Former Superintendent Linda Canzanelli (from 1989 to 1995) remarked on the WRNHP as “the first park that was controversial.”³²¹ The name itself, she reported, caused a stir among individuals inside and outside of the NPS. The park’s Administrative History research interviews with past superintendents, rangers, and community leaders about the park’s development indicate vivid strife. The superintendent from 1989 to 1995, Linda Canzanelli, relays her unprecedented influence over the initial exhibit designs. Park Historian Dr. Vivien Rose worked alongside Canzanelli in designing the Visitor Center exhibit spaces during those formative and early years. Rose explains that the effect of the Visitor Center exhibit space was to destabilize memory:

The [historical] narrative, however, has not been complicated. When this park was created, it was not complicated; now it is... I don’t see the point in history that isn’t

³¹⁹ Personal conversations with park historians and rangers confirm that this is, even today, understood as a vague commission.

³²⁰ *Public Law 96-607--Dec. 28, 1980, 1980, sec. 1601*, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-94/pdf/STATUTE-94-Pg3539.pdf>.

³²¹ Conard and Smith, “Linda Canzenelli,” 10.

transformative. It's not that history is intended, that that's the mission of history, but anytime you can look at another culture and you can say, "look, see, here's their experiences and here is what they did with it." You have another opportunity to look at your own experiences and say, "Oh look, see here's her, or his, experiences and see what they did with it." It's an opportunity to have a mirror.³²²

Rose connects a more complicated past with a present that needs reflection and critical analysis. For Canzanelli, the purpose of the park "is to make people uncomfortable" through "very controversial exhibits."³²³ "We're not telling you the answers," she explained, "but we're challenging your preconceived notions." Thus not only did the exhibit spaces speak to modern politics, it offered measured challenges for numerous sides. The second floor exhibit space was meant to be especially provocative so that "regardless of where you came from, emotionally, intellectually, position wise, that you would find something you related to, and something that offended you. I wanted to go to that extreme on the emotions." However, she admits that guides were unprepared to respond to the emotional outpouring—often tears.

Now, I turn to the experience of the Visitor Center. The design has changed very little since first installation however the visual habits and image vernacular of description is from my own perspective, grounded in 2013-2014 world. I examine the installation to piece together the stage upon which the 1995 controversy played out. Based on the limited news coverage available, Administrative History research interviews, park Interpretive Plan, 2009 Ethnographic Overview, and personal conversations with park employees who experienced the tension, I work to sight the visual role in the memory contest.

I enter the first floor of the center and am informed by a ranger of the next showing for the short NPS video about the 1848 Women's Rights Convention. I am free to interact with the information desk kiosk (where a ranger is stationed), wander the gift shop, examine the iconic

³²² Conard and Smith, "Vivien Rose," 17, 21.

³²³ Conard and Smith, "Linda Canzenelli," 7,6.

bronze statues depicting some of the First Wave feminists at the convention, peek in on the small circulating exhibit that is installed at the time. Finally I can appreciate the contemporary “photo wall” exhibit that spans almost the entire East wall (the longest, unbroken interrupted wall of the first floor) and which climbs the stairs to the second floor museum exhibit, just as any visitor can. Although the recent “Comprehensive Interpretive Plan” seems to recognize the photo wall as part of the first floor exhibit, Park Historian Dr. Anne Derosie claimed in a recent interview that the entire stairwell is considered part of the second floor exhibit. This is significant because the second floor is dedicated to the museum aspect of the Visitor Center whereas the first floor has plenty of images but only a rare placard or caption. Dr. Derosie explained that the photo wall’s purpose was “to show that women are doing lots of different things.”³²⁴ Kaufman describes the East wall “photo wall”³²⁵ as a “multicultural display.”³²⁶ The diversity of subjects and activities depict a women’s movement that has moved in different ways and towards different ends.

Through my visit to the park and subsequent communication with rangers and the park historian, I understand the photograph’s appearance and premier location to be important factors in the controversy that surrounds it. I read from my 2013-2014 context as a graduate student of relative privilege. The photo is a nearly life-size, top half, cut out of an apparently black-female earnestly involved in protest. Her eyes are wide open in an expectant, confrontational expression. The sign she holds stretched above her simply reads “BLACK LESBIAN FEMINIST.” There are no captions for any photos on the east wall; however, a ranger at the nearby information desk kiosk can reference an index explaining the photo is from Bettmann archive by the photographer Bettye Lane. The woman depicted is Gwenn Craig at the 1980 Democratic National Convention

³²⁴ Telephone interview by author with Dr. Derosie on April 5th 2013.

³²⁵ WRNHP Comprehensive Interpretive Planning 1996-2002

³²⁶ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice: A History*, 224.

in New York City. The photo is referred to by rangers, the park historian and the media as “the Black Lesbian Feminist” or the “BLF.”

Her location is in dialectic interplay between two other contrasting images. To understand this interplay is to better understand how and why the Black lesbian feminist stands out visually and thus rhetorically. The first point of comparison is to the right of the image. It is a photograph of a white female protester near a second protester in the same frame who holds a sign reading: “No More Profits.” From the same ranger resource, the index explains much more about the woman depicted, 1988 Ms. Santa Cruz County, Michelle Jeanette Anderson at 21. Visitors can learn that she protested on the final stage of a beauty contest with a sign that read “Pageants hurt all women.” The surrounding photos can certainly be described as racially, spatially, culturally diverse, however there are unique visual contrasts easily drawn from betwixt Craig and Anderson that stem first and foremost from their similarity as females-in-protest. Craig and Anderson mirror each other in a fashion that draws attention to their differences. The two images visually stand out based on their relative spatial proximity and the similarities of each subject’s activity and intensity.

The differences of race and sexual orientation are most prominent. Gwenn Craig’s protest sign clearly and proudly distinguishes her racial identity from that of Michelle Jeanette Anderson. Not only is Craig visually “Black” but she is also forcing the viewer to grapple with what that means by so adamantly lofting her sign and staring out. The sign foregrounds not only each of the three identities on their own but also their relationship to each other—what may be shocking is the declaration that there is at all a relationship between any of them. There is no way for viewers to know if Craig and Anderson’s sexual identity is different although that Anderson’s orientation is “invisible” means she can be assumed heterosexual and thus “normal.”

Based on the pervasive gender disciplining of the 1990s,³²⁷ it is feasible visitors perceive this racial and sexual orientation distinction as an affront or *flaunting*. Difference was/is silenced to avoid internal “conflict” and division which, many were afraid, would render the Women’s Rights movement dull against such a strong opponent: Patriarchy. The racial controversies over the recent SlutWalks voiced first by the Black Woman’s Blueprint in “An Open Letter from Black Women to the SlutWalk”³²⁸ affirm that the feminist movement still has privileged expressions that ignore or actively discount the experiences of lesbians and women of color. Feminism has a history of “you’re too different” anxiety. Gwenn Craig, as a lifelong activist, must know these politics but still chose to protest as she did.³²⁹ In this image she is more than a Black lesbian feminist, she is a *flaunting* Black lesbian feminist. And while in such earnest protest she may even appear to be the *angry* Black lesbian feminist.

The second image that is in dialectical conversation with the Black lesbian feminist is the iconic set of bronze statues that Gwenn Craig could be presumed to be affronting, based on her gaze. These life-sized sculptures called “The First Wave” were fashioned by Lloyd Lillie and are dispersed in the center of the first floor. The statue set depicts several of the familiar faces we know attended the convention in 1948 along with several anonymous figures who stand in for those we know came but did not sign the Declaration of Sentiments. As I turn away from these statues and towards the second floor, I look straight at the staircase where the Black lesbian feminist photo is installed.

³²⁷ I generally refer to Judith Butler’s understanding of sex/gender as repetitive performance of norms in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993).

³²⁸ Admin, “An Open Letter from Black Women to the SlutWalk,” *Black Women’s Blueprint*, September 2013, <http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/2011/09/23/an-open-letter-from-black-women-to-the-slutwalk/>.

³²⁹ The original photo (pre-edits) is a curious study. In it she is amidst several white DNC protesters who pay her no attention in that instant. I wonder about the decision to cut those individuals out. To the best of my knowledge, Craig has never commented on the photo’s editing, placement or the controversy that followed. She continues to be an activist in San Francisco.

The contrast is not only one of race, again, but also of time and decorum. Among the statues Frederick Douglass, a well known Black abolitionist and suffragist activist, appears in the same bronze shade as each other (white) depicted individual. His presence is not immediately difficult or different. Although, he is recognized as a distinct character because of his race. During President Barak Obama's 2013 visit to the park, media snapped probably thousands of photos but frequently published those that emphasized the president's similarities to Douglass. Frequent photographs meaningfully captured them in the same frame. Douglass is not flaunting or visually angry. Additionally, "the First Wave" shows standing bodies, dressed in expected fashion with expected expressions of the mid 19th century. These figures are involved in nothing obviously protest-like. There are no picket signs, no visible demands, no subversive identity claims or body expressions. Other statues are involved in reasonable discussion or passively still. The feeling is one of a tranquil, solid wave rather than a chaotic and uncontrollable one.

The context of the museum orientation video and tours explains that the men and women depicted by the statues wanted for women, first and foremost, the right to vote – a dated demand that today very few in the US would contest. However, the Black lesbian feminist *flauntingly/angrily* raises her sign to an audience who are 1) not prepared by the orientation movie for the radical feminism she is made to stand in for (by both critics and defenders) and 2) may not agree that such an identity is morally correct and/or 3) should be sanctioned and fostered by the government. Her visual and socio-political meaning is that of disruption. The photograph is also an excellent example of the tension W.J.T. Mitchell demonstrated between "image/text" and "image-text" and "imagetext." The first is the perspective of the relationship between the verbal and visual as a "problematic gap" and the last two refer to a basic relationship that does

not differentiate.³³⁰ While the BLF photograph may be treated as an imagetext by NPS literature and media coverage, my approach analyzes the image vernacular, thus illustrating a *productive* gap between the *said* and the *seen*. Throughout the coverage of the photograph, the three words in the image are inseparable from the act of protest evident in the rest of the composition. However, the fact that image's shape and those characteristics of Craig not already indicated by her protest sign are not discussed speaks to the kind of control *this* verbal has *within this* visual. For example, her skin tone and gender are both legible in verbal terms while also probably visually comprehensible without the verbal clues, based on visual stereotyping. However, her sexuality is *out* because of the verbal dimension. Still, the verbal is visualized in protest form (a sign) rather than a mere info-label. The protest sign suggests confrontational flaunting. The BLF's visual location and the reading that location explains, in part, why this specific image is controversial and becomes an icon for larger discussions of the park's purpose.

As the third superintendant, Joanne Hanley came to the park in 1994 amidst federal budget austerity and an NPS focus on partnership building. Hanley understood collaboration with local groups as her main focus and, as a result, diverged from former superintendent Canzanelli's otherwise NPS supported interpretive approach.³³¹ Hanley orchestrated a local multi-day summit in May of 1995 to interrogate the interpretive responsibility of the park and steer the message "back to middle course."³³² The first meeting, of only park staff, went smoothly. However, the narrative clash was especially apparent in later meetings which included park staff, NPS staff, local representatives and community members. Some community members and park officials' desired the park to exhibit the definitive and cordoned off historical account,

³³⁰ W. J. T Mitchell, "Beyond Comparison: Picture, Text, and Method," in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 89.

³³¹ Conard, "'All Men and Women Are Created Equal': An Administrative History of Women's Rights National Historical Park," 209–210.

³³² *Ibid.*, 210.

while others were opposed to closing the chapter. I refer to these clashing narratives as “Birthplace of Suffrage” public narrative and the “Nurturing of Social Movements” counterpublic narrative.

The first group emphasized that the most significant outcome of the convention was the 1920 19th amendment which guaranteed women the right to vote. The timeline narrated in the Chapel tour, then, is precisely that which this first group believed the park as a whole ought to convey. Anything more risked “unnecessary” political implications that were not deemed the purview of the Congressional commission. The second group wished to see, instead, an on-going narrative that spoke to the evolution of and branching off from the First Wave. Hanley weighed with the first group stating that “the park ‘could not be an advocate for social change causes or special interest groups... we interpret all viewpoints.’”³³³ The language, however, is slippery in an unexplained or otherwise supported distinction between *interpretation* and *documentation*:

Although staff members participating in the session recognized that the Wesleyan Chapel was a Mecca for contemporary feminists, there was little mention of interpreting the women’s rights movement beyond passage of the 1920 suffrage amendment and only to ‘document’ the ongoing women’s rights movement.³³⁴

Conrad writes that “one person’s dream park was another’s nightmare.”³³⁵ The BLF photograph had already stirred controversy among locals and those involved in the summit’s battle of meaning and purpose also seem transfixed by the image. Between the summit meetings and the iconoclastic act, The *Syracuse Herald American* ran a single sentence editorial in August of 1995 with the title “Women’s National Park Espouses False Feminism” and the text argues, “this destructive movement, with its anti-family, pro-abortion and pro-homosexual advocacy, has

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid., 6.

a taxpayer-funded paradise in the women's park.”³³⁶ Even when not discussed outright, the image is still an unnamed point of anxiety.

Subtle Iconoclasm (1995)

Superintendent Canzanelli, who admitted in her interview that the BLF made people

“uncomfortable,” left the park in 1995 and was replaced by Superintendent Joanne Hanley. The May summit was clearly Hanley’s attempt to rectify the disparate differences between the park’s presentation and that of traditional historical parks. Again, Canzanelli enjoyed unprecedented freedom when designing the Visitor Center and it did not take long for the iconoclasm to occur.³³⁷ On December 8th in 1995, Hanley removed the photograph for various reasons ranging from complaints on behalf of children, as part of an effort to rebuild connections with the local community, and that she did not believe the photograph fit with the first floor exhibit.³³⁸ In her interview, Hanley repeatedly stated she “honestly” didn’t remember what happened and offered no clarity about which was the real reason.³³⁹ In her interview with Conard for the park’s Administrative History, Hanley suggests Conard “[not] believe everything [she] read in the paper” and that the event “to [her], and [her] whole management scheme there... was a blip.”³⁴⁰

Anxiety had existed during Canzanelli’s tenure, however no alterations to the exhibit were

³³⁶ “Women’s National Park Espouses False Feminism,” *Syracuse Herald American*, August 27, 1995, sec. Editorial.

³³⁷ The official account of the controversy is worth consideration as a whole from the Administrative History: Hanley *unilaterally* decided, in December 1995, to remove from the east stairway wall the exhibit image that was referred to as the “Black lesbian feminist,” or “BLF” photograph. Her reason has variously been given that she was responding to a visitor complaint, was concerned about offending school children, or felt that the photograph was interpretively out of place and better suited for the second-floor interpretive station, “Campaigning Women,” where it could be placed next to a photograph of an opposing view. Hanley’s own retrospective statement is that “there was no rhyme or reason” to “the whole collage on the wall. People did not know what they were looking at.”³³⁷ Augie Sinocropi, one of the Park’s long-time supporters, pinpoints Women’s Rights NHP’s growing reputation as a “gay park” as the reason. That photograph, she states unequivocally, “was perhaps talked more about in the community than any single thing that was there A lot of people started calling it ‘the gay park’ around here.”

³³⁸ Conard, “‘All Men and Women Are Created Equal’: An Administrative History of Women’s Rights National Historical Park,” 211.

³³⁹ Rebecca Conard and Elizabeth Smith, “Joanne Hanley,” May 13, 2009, 13–15, Women’s Rights National Historical Park; 12, Joanne Hanley, National Park Service; Women’s Rights National Historical Park.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

documented. Hanley acted the iconoclast amidst the iconophobia expressed in the local community which existed in a tenuous political national arena for gays and, especially, lesbians.

She fulfills the first and second steps of iconoclasm in one swift move. First, the denouncement of the image is evident in her nebulous rationale for removing it and her preference, voiced clearly in the May summit, for a more focused park message. This rationale was circulated through *The Post-Standard* of the Syracuse area which reported that “Hanley said she removed the picture in an attempt to focus the message of the park on the history of women's rights.”³⁴¹ The image was relocated to the second floor the next day where the “contemporary” issues were on display. After pressure from activists and in particular Seneca Falls’ own Becky Bly, the photograph was reinstalled in its original location in mid-February. Given some in the community are said to have branded the park “the gay park”³⁴² and some convention celebrations were labeled “dyke fest,”³⁴³ it is possible that if the image made no comment on sexuality it may not have been a cause for anxiety, however, the evidence of feminist movements excluding, denouncing and sometimes erasing overt, brazen racial differences are too prevalent to ignore in this case as well. Furthermore, the evidence of successful conservative right rhetoric in the 1980s and 1990s habitualized connections between social reform and “dissident” sexualities. Yes, were Gwenn Craig a white lesbian, the community and thus Superintendent Hanley may have reacted differently. However, it is important to bear in mind that though Hawaii courts struck down the ban on same-sex marriage in 1993, conservative America’s homophobia and zealot-like protective stance over “family values” continued to relegate homosexuals to the invisible

³⁴¹ Teresa Starr Fugit, “Lesbian Photo Was Placed in Closet,” *Post-Standard, The (Syracuse, NY)*, February 22, 1996, Cayuga edition.

³⁴² Rebecca Conard and Elizabeth Smith, “August Sinicropi” (National Park Service, August 27, 2009), 15, Women’s Rights National Historical Park; 12, August Sinicropi, National Park Service; Women’s Rights National Historical Park.

³⁴³ Miller, Greenwald, and Vogel, *Ethnographic Overview and Assessment, Women’s Rights National Historical Park*, 150.

margins of society.³⁴⁴ The divisive community context of the 1970s and 1980s and the fact that the Black lesbian feminist is a prominently visible lesbian in the park speak to a specific anxiety about sexuality in America, the women's movement, and Seneca Falls.

The second step of iconoclasm is enacted by the act of omission. Simply put, what is *not* removed is commended for its interpretive in-placeness, objective qualities and/or political correctness. The images Hanley valorized were either those more closely associated with the convention or those that do not flaunt controversial sexual and racial politics. The very image of the park as a politically "safe" collection of documents replaces the unapologetic Black lesbian feminist. "The First Wave" bronze statue collection and the white beauty pageant protester Anderson show by contrast what was acceptable. Images were appropriate if they spoke to the immediate experiences of the 1848 convention or the experiences of an assumed heterosexual (no marker of a non-normative identity is read as normative)³⁴⁵ identity. In February, the *Syracuse Peace Newsletter* reported that Hanley's censorship had rendered the exhibit "sanitized" and presented "an incomplete portrayal of the diversity of women's lives."³⁴⁶

The iconoclasm resulted in an increased circulation of the photograph both representatively and figuratively in the news and activist circles. Coverage from local news media and activist circles did not begin until February of 1996. The *Post-Standard* and the *Syracuse Herald Journal* reported the clash and noted the accusations of homophobia and racism. Descriptions of the photograph (and its dialectic relationship with the white female protesting image beside it)³⁴⁷ focus on the three words of the protest sign, further demonstrating the image/text. Other visual elements were either left undescribed or conveyed visually in

³⁴⁴ Gallagher and Bull, *Perfect Enemies*, 197–203.

³⁴⁵ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

³⁴⁶ Coalition for Lesbian Visibility, "Censorship at Seneca Falls," *Peace Newsletter*, February 1996, sec. Community Update.

³⁴⁷ Starr Fugit, "Lesbian Photo Was Placed in Closet."

accompanying news photographs typical of print journalism. In fact, Craig is simply described as “a woman” in all cases. Although the Syracuse Peace Newsletter called for “letters of outrage” and poignantly asked:

Shall this action be interpreted as both homophobic and racist? How would Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Amelia Bloomer and the other early activists living in Seneca Falls 150 years ago respond to this version of “out of sight, out of mind” feminism? Does Superintendent Hanley have a private agenda contrary to the original goals of the Woman’s Rights National Historic Park?³⁴⁸

Readers certainly conjured a mental picture if photographic proof was not provided or not in order to make sense of the controversy. What is more, the coverage also sights the core purpose of the park which underscores the clash at the May summit. Media coverage is especially important for locals as far away as Syracuse or farther east who may be unaware of the museum.

As the story of iconoclasm circulates, so also does the memory contest. News media readers are made aware, if however vaguely, that the park’s narrative is a site of contention. News coverage underscored this point. Media associated Hanley with the camp who wanted a more “orderly” exhibit space, explaining “she thinks people are reading too much into the picture’s removal” and that she suggested the existing interpretive plan was “out of date.”³⁴⁹ On the other side, Becky Bly, who directed the Coalition for Lesbian Visibility, described the act as homophobic. According to Bly, the superintendent had an “agenda” to censor the lives and accomplishments “if they should fall outside of what is acceptable to the conservative religious right movement in America.”³⁵⁰ In other media, Bly expressed a fear that “park efforts to create new ‘interpretive programs’ at the park quite possibly will obliterate lesbians and ‘unpopular gains’” and that “Lesbians and many of the contemporary achievements of women may be

³⁴⁸ Coalition for Lesbian Visibility, “Censorship at Seneca Falls.”

³⁴⁹ Starr Fugit, “Lesbian Photo Was Placed in Closet.”

³⁵⁰ Susan Jordan, “Group Questions Exclusions of Lesbians from Women’s Rights National Park,” *The Empty Closet*, April 1996, 279 edition.

`interpreted' right out of the park."³⁵¹ Supporters of the broader "Nurturing of Social Movements" timeline understood the removal of the BLF to be a politically motivated iconoclasm. The *Syracuse Herald Journal* later published a brief justificatory response presumably from Hanley that further highlights the tension between accurate interpretation of the "Birth of Suffrage" rather than that of "Nurturing of Social Movements":

Our decision to, once again, return the photograph to its original location was based on a desire to allow a team of interpretive specialists and historians to look at the entire interpretive program of the park, including the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House, the M'Clintock House, the Wesleyan Chapel and the Visitor Center, and provide recommendations for future interpretive development.³⁵²

This is the entire response through the *Syracuse Herald Journal* and puts the exhibit space in the hands of "specialists and historians" not residents and activists. Because of the photograph and the image vernacular of the 1990s, the larger controversy over the park's narrative is clear.

Activist circles also played a role in circulating the image and memory contest. The iconoclasm served as a constitutive force in at least three major sources. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) also disseminated through listserv email a brief description of the controversy with Becky Bly's contact information. The February email decries the "censorship" and calls for support to have the photo reinstated to its original position (it is unclear if by February 23rd Hanley had already done so or not).³⁵³ *Off Our Backs*, a long standing women's newsjournal, published a miniature of the BLF and several paragraphs describing the controversy. The protester is identified as a "woman of color" and the photo wall as a "mosaic of women's lives and women's histories" but "Hanley does not believe the black,

³⁵¹ Starr Fugit, "Lesbian Photo Was Placed in Closet."

³⁵² "Photo Sparks Debate Women's Rights Park Must Serve All," *Syracuse Herald Journal*, March 14, 1996, sec. Editorial.

³⁵³ Claudia Manley, "GLAADLines 02.23.96," February 23, 1996, <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/orgs/GLAAD/general.information/glaadlines/1996/02.23.96>.

lesbian feminist (the only lesbian image in the display) belongs with the rest of the photos.”³⁵⁴

Readers are encouraged to bypass Hanley and contact others including her superior and the park’s Congressional officials. *The Empty Closet*, published by the Gay Alliance, is New York State’s oldest gay newspaper and it published the story on the front page in April of 1996 with more attention to the implications of the BLF’s removal and a photograph.³⁵⁵ The journalist shares the Coalition for Lesbian Visibility’s warning that though by April the photograph was replaced, there was still danger that a significant rewriting of the movement’s history could disconnect its earlier history from modern iterations. Scholars of women’s studies and women’s history and gays and lesbians are encouraged to keep vigilant watch over the park as it develops even going so far as requesting the new interpretive plans and sharing their thoughts about it with Superintendent Hanley.³⁵⁶ The journalist and Coalition for Lesbian Visibility both wonder if the struggle by lesbian women for rights will be visually present once the dust has settled. Bly is quoted as saying, “We do not feel that Superintendent Hanley has the right to render invisible, and remove from the public forum, our part in history.”³⁵⁷ Readers who stake their identity in a modern social movement that found strategic and foundational resources and parallels in the suffrage movement are likely to reject the narrow “Birth of Suffrage” narrative as these sources circulate it.

For those already involved in the debate over the park’s scope, the image became a central icon of the disagreement. News media and activist groups circulated the image and thus the memory contest. While it is probably not true that all memories circulate as we are not always aware or reflexive of their mediations, in this case the image and the memory debate

³⁵⁴ “Homophobia at Women’s Rights Park,” *Off Our Backs* 26, no. 3 (March 1, 1996): 4.

³⁵⁵ The photograph is nearly impossible to see due to the way the newspaper has been electronically archived at University of Rochester. It shows what looks like the silhouette Gwenn Craig with her sign

³⁵⁶ Jordan, “Group Questions Exclusions of Lesbians from Women’s Rights National Park.”

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

frame each other for readers. The battle over the image and the narrative clash superimposed onto it circulate together.

Covert Iconoclasm (1996 – 2000)

In 1995, the BLF rose to even greater distinction through physical transition from the first floor exhibit to the “closet” of the second floor which led to circulation throughout news media and activist circles. Anxiety within the NPS reverberated for several years and guided later park documents. I posit that the photograph remained a point of anxiety. Many fellow staff members and the NPS management in Washington, D.C. did not support Hanley’s action. She consulted no superiors and discussed it with no one on her staff. Hanley’s removal of the BLF was “reactive more than reflexive.”³⁵⁸ When she retroactively wrote formally to seek permission to reinstall the photo elsewhere in the exhibit space, NPS management entirely denied the request. The park documents backlash from supporters of the image and non-supporters alike, at least one non-supporter on staff believed that, politics aside, the park had a responsibility to reflect the whole of the constituency and any solution should have been decided through a town hall meeting.³⁵⁹

Hanley entered as a Superintendent prepared for due process. The May 1995 meeting, prior to her role as iconoclast, sought to gauge the larger interests in the park and measure the park’s exhibits amidst those expectations. After the controversy, she continued to organize and facilitate rigorous studies common for NPS historical sites. The Interpretive Planning workshop, which Hanley promised and Bly cautioned the Gay and lesbian community against, was held in 1996. The workshop distributed surveys and took feedback from visitors. From 1997 to 2002 the Strategic Management Planning was underway to produce the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan

³⁵⁸ Conard, “‘All Men and Women Are Created Equal’: An Administrative History of Women’s Rights National Historical Park,” 6.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 212.

which proscribed the direction of the park's future development and strategy. While the studies found that the first floor Lloyd Lillie statues, the First Wave, drew the most comment and questioning, one specific line speaks to the keen awareness park staff had of the power of the BLF: "One visitor summed it up this way, 'All the things on the wall and how it is about all women, not just racial.' [sic] None seemed disturbed by any of the images, including the one of a woman holding a sign that says 'Black lesbian feminist.'"³⁶⁰ The remainder of the document mentions the wall of images several more times referencing possible visitor confusion and proposes future planning for supplemental interpretation "designed to tell the compelling stories depicted on the wall and help visitors understand the continued relevance of the Declaration of Sentiments."³⁶¹

The official stance appears to prioritize framing the images to reduce confusion and foster mental connections between suffragettes and modern social movements for equal rights. The continued anxiety indicates an ongoing iconophobic relationship to the BLF. The interviews conducted by Conard for the park's Administrative History also frequently mention the controversy suggesting that recording the story is of utmost importance. Conard's 2008 interview with Canzanelli reveals the broad differences between her approach and that of Hanley and they spend considerable time hashing out the BLF controversy. However, in Hanley's 2009 interview, Conard struggled to learn more about the controversy as Hanley frequently claimed she could not remember.³⁶² The 2009 interview with community leader, local business owner and significant advocate for the park, August Sinicropi, discloses the ongoing anxiety in a different manner. When shifting from a discussion about the Wesleyan Chapel renovation controversy, Sinicropi

³⁶⁰ "Women's Rights National Historical Park Comprehensive Interpretive Plan," 52.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁶² Conard and Smith, "Joanne Hanley," 14.

explains “I think the bigger concern was the interpretive program.”³⁶³ Asked to explain, she begins to anxiously explain in the context of the iconoclasm:

SINICROPI: Well, again, and believe me, I’m speaking just as frankly as I can here, and I don’t want to be taken for a bigot in any way, but the most prominent sign as you walk into the Visitor’s Center to go upstairs to the interpretive program was a black woman holding a sign, “Black Lesbian Feminist.”

CONARD: Right.

SINICROPI: And that was perhaps talked more about in the community than any single thing that was there.³⁶⁴

Sinicropi then glosses over the specific controversy with empathy for Hanley’s position and focuses on visitor confusion. She exhibited iconophobia when blaming the photograph for misdirecting attention to sexual politics and away from the original purpose of the park, a “bone of contention” for her. However, she follows the discussion with more anxiety:

CONARD: Right. Yes. Thank you, and believe me, I certainly wouldn’t consider you a bigot on this, but I really wanted—

SINICROPI: [laughter] Thank you. It’s difficult to talk about, because you have no idea who I am or what I am, but I know for sure, I’ve been involved in numerous conversations, and not just the poster. The visitors, ultimately a lot of the visitors, too, were lesbian, so to a certain extent the locals started seeing it as the gay park. That bothered people more than the design of the chapel.

CONARD: Okay. It really was the way the interpretive exhibitry, the message that came through in the permanent exhibit in the new Visitor Center?

SINICROPI: Yeah.³⁶⁵

This interview is insightful not only because Sinicropi works outside of the NPS establishment and thus has access to different conversations in the community but also because her self-conscious language demonstrates how powerful the photograph remained in 2009. Interpretive planning studies and Administrative History interviews indicate a continued iconophobic preoccupation with the visual power of the BLF.

³⁶³ Conard and Smith, “August Sinicropi,” 14.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 14–15.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

Continued Circulation and Moving Towards Iconophilia

Today, park visitors can move through the Visitor Center with little comment about the photograph. Rangers do not report recent complaints and the guestbook seems continually full of grateful and amazed reflections with a rare vague comment that may or may not suggest support for the park's progressive tone. This is not to say that anxiety is gone. In 2009, one journalist thought it important to note that during Sarah Palin's visit to the park, she "remarked with pleasure on a black-and-white photograph of four women aiming pistols, and passed in silence under another of a woman holding aloft a sign reading, "Black lesbian feminist.""³⁶⁶ The photograph continues to serve in some capacity as a test of the park's narrative scope. It is unlikely that the "Nurturing of Social Movements" counterpublic narrative is a simple binary against the "Birthplace of Suffrage" public narrative.

The continued circulation of the photograph is likely to take unexpected twists and turns. In a political atmosphere where the Human Rights Campaign is increasingly successful in winning same-sex marriage legal rights and more individuals feel sufficiently inspired and supported to "come out," it is perhaps unlikely that the interpretive scope of the park will ever be narrowed to simply the "Birthplace of Suffrage." However, very real stigma still blocks full social equality and the thorough reassessment of social norms that GLBTQ activists still prod. A handful of blogs and Pinterest accounts feature the original photograph of Gwenn Craig without the silhouetted editing. Additionally, the WRNHP Facebook page has uploaded photos that either showcase the photo wall or use it as a backdrop for portraits. The image's cyber movement has not taken on the protest qualities Lotfalian analyzes in Green Revolution visuals however the potential is present.

³⁶⁶ Smith, "Palin Takes Low-Key Return To The Road."

As overt clash has diminished and covert iconophobia will likely dissipate, the park may become a memory site that encourages iconophilic looking. In spite of the 2002 suggestions that the photo wall have clearer interpretation, no handouts were created nor have placards been installed. Still, a visitor must approach the ranger or volunteer at the desk and request what little information is available in the ranger resources available to them. The collection of images along the long wall stretch to the second floor. Some attract more attention than others however their installation encourages they each be seen in the complex and inexplicable network in which they are installed. The order does not follow chronology, geographic trends, political allegiances, or any other clear categorization. The visitor is positioned to look and accept a diversity of experiences. One does not read, one looks. Text would convey specific details that “freeze-frame” the subject and lock the viewer into only particular relationships with the image. Without curated explanations, the photographs, comics and artifacts are freer to move which is all the more important to emphasize that each marks *ongoing* struggles or simply lives lived and *living*. This material in-distinction allows for positive associations with images perhaps even in spite of political differences.

Conclusion

This analysis circulates through the recent history of a particular photograph to test Finnegan and Kang’s conceptualization of iconophilia as a critical practice in public sphere theory. The public memory contest at the WRNHP helped demonstrate the role of vision in public memory and *visa versa*. The circulation of the image in media and activist circles shows the importance of seeing memory. The most significant mediation of the image in this case is memory itself. To *see* the BLF is to *see* the park’s memory thus the risk of not seeing the BLF conveys a particular memory as well. The fight was clearly more than aesthetic call and more than one of “decency” as it pit “Birthplace of Suffrage” against “Nurturing of Social Movements.”

Moving forward, I attempted to picture where iconophilia may be practiced. The photo wall layout suggests a diversity of images in vague and possibly changing contexts and the lack of placards with “freeze-framing” text allows for a more fluid relationship both between the viewer and the viewed and the image and the imagined. If vision and memory were so tightly knit during the iconoclasm that “closeted” the photograph, then as vision is gradually freed from anxiety so memory may also move. By tracing the image vernacular of the early and mid-1990s which constituted park staff, locals and visitors way of seeing, I hope to have thawed this particular image and demonstrated its potential movement. Further study of the relationship between memory and the visual can garner more precise insight. While it may be valuable for the memory of an ongoing social movement to move itself, dangerous memory contests that risk devastating erasure may have very different connections to vision. Park visitors may learn more than just women’s history when they experience the photo wall; they may engage in an awareness of the level of mediation present and feel the constitutive force of images that hail us through vision and transform our memory.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Women's Rights National Historical Park hosts and influences significant memories of American history and numerous social movements. The material landscape of exhibits and historical sites nominate, shape and are shaped by the memory practices of the park. Today, there is little doubt that the 1848 Women's Rights Convention enjoys star status as a foundational origin story in the imagination of many, including American politicians, historians and, especially, feminist scholars and activists. The organizers are heralded as visionaries and ideal citizens as, for example, through celebratory minted currency, postage and education texts. In the case that Hillary Clinton, a vocal supporter of the park, continues her political career and the National Women's History Project secures additional funding and support, the park will surely continue to be a part of political discourse and serve as a destination for thousands more visitors interested in women's rights and American history.

However, it seems that historians' troubling lack of spotlight on this particular origin story³⁶⁷ is mirrored in the scarcity of analysis of the park as it guards, solidifies, circulates and in a sense "officiates" the NPS' account of the women's rights movement's beginnings. As a result, it is important to correct the dearth of analysis regarding the park's persuasive means. This thesis takes feminist history and memory contests seriously by interrogating the environments through which they are enunciated. I consistently return to the same questions throughout the project.

What are the strategies being used to present which histories and what perceptions of the ongoing movements do these strategies encourage?

In this project, I attempted to cast a wide net to locate some of the specific visual, spatial and discursive practices at the park. My approach draws from a collection of analytical tools to

³⁶⁷ Tetraault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls*, 4.

understand the unique rhetorical strategies as I encountered them in the spaces or the archives available to me. With an awareness of the diversity of visitors, variability of park staff and many other unique factors, I located major rhetorical strategies at work in the Visitor Center and Chapel. In each space, I attend to *how* memory is conveyed. Each chapter pivots from the park as a contested memory site of ongoing movements to explore particular strategies. The specific pieces of the whole, I hope, contribute to our understanding of the temporally and spatially specific public memory strategies in the NPS and of feminist history.

I began the thesis with a brief account of the park's historical exigence and formation to situate the memory work. Intrinsically, NPS officiated historical narratives are both selective and influential thus, analysis can provide insight into the political struggles of the time. Additionally, I explained my interpretation of public memory and its relationship to the material. The remaining chapters focused on specific spaces and times to best capture a snap shot of the rhetorical strategies as they circulated. My criticism keeps a keen on eye the possible feminist implications of the memory work at hand. The moving parts include the physical development of the park, the transforming interpretive philosophies, local attitudes, the outgrowth social movements and the larger sociopolitical contexts in which the park and visitors exist. Each chapter is unique enough to warrant a brief summation regarding the most important contributions.

The second chapter explores the first (and for many visitors the *primary*) spaces which frame the park: the Visitor Center's first and second floor exhibits. The spatial and visual design nominates particular looking practices; the convention's 18th century context is well documented and explained at great length, however, modern iterations of the movement are presented ahistorically and allow for a politics of universal sisterhood to remain uninterrupted,

unquestioned and privileged. I want to return to the park's two sensitively bare locations in the Visitor Center: the eighth pillar in the timeline "spine" which supposedly spans 1993 to now and the back wall which asks "What will it be like when women and men are truly equal?" Together, the pillar and large sign pose complicated questions. They clearly link history with the political future and invite visitors to respond where no "right" answer seems obvious. While the exhibits allow free movement and do not necessarily order much of the material, the "consciousness raising" goals of feminist museum spaces are not encouraged due to the lack of what Chandra Talpade Mohanty calls a "politics of location." The Visitor Center allows for those already primed for *solidarity* (in place of the universal sisterhood which tries to transcend differences rather than engage them) and divestment of privilege to move about the space. You can see some historical fissures of the movement and reflect on politics of location *if* you already know what to look for. Otherwise the park does not help visitors begin that process. The hardships and fracturing of the movement can be glossed over in a selective politics, a choose-your-own-feminism design, exemplified quite well by Sarah Palin's visit. Through ahistorical framing, photo color manipulation for a timeless effect, and the spatial proximity of the collage design, the exhibits de-contextualize histories to allow for a broad brush stroke of universal sisterhood feminism. I can appreciate the intentions of encouraging visitors to curate their own experiences but am concerned that the design leaves damaging privilege unexamined. Visitors are not prepared to begin the difficult personal reflections necessary to take such complicated questions seriously.

The ranger-guided tours of the Chapel and Stanton house engage in very different material practices to emphasize the justificatory narrative of why the origins of the women's rights movement are in Seneca Falls, NY. Together, the memory mapping of Seneca Falls in the

Chapel and the NPS focus on objective authenticity—a mode that privileges the original and only “factually grounded” history—forward a carefully guarded and closed account. The memory mapping of Seneca Falls in the Chapel tours naturalizes the park’s justificatory narrative by relaying how the surrounding soil already teemed with social justice attitudes and behaviors. Ranger tours triangulate Seneca Falls in the heart of social change amidst Quaker, abolitionist, temperance and religious revival movements nearby. They also often account for the commemorations of the event which followed. Though this is selective—the Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice of the 1980s is not a part of the tours. The park’s unwillingness to fully furnish either historic site for fear of being “inaccurate” and ranger’s careful emphasis on the relative authenticity of objects communicate an uneasiness with memory’s malleability. These practices do not encourage visitors to critically engage with the politics of history and memory, the messiness. Memory tensions could be insightful entry points to discuss the incoherence and fissures of the movement both historically and at present.

In the fourth chapter, a unique iconoclasm in 1995 left significant traces in the archives and the local community. The contested memory pronounced itself loudly on the face of the photograph as an acute point of anxiety not just for the NPS but the community of Seneca Falls too. I argue the anxiety over the image reveals the controversy concerning the “appropriate” narrative the park *ought* to be telling about the movement. I use Roger Aden’s reading of narratives and counternarratives concerning the NPS Independence Park in Philadelphia to reveal the clash of narratives in Seneca Falls. Using Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang’s analysis of iconoclasm in public sphere theory, I analyze the clash as it is symbolized by and superimposed through the anxiety over this specific image. I am especially interested, thanks to insight from Prof. Lisa Flores, in honing the last chapter to develop the concept of racial iconicity. The

controversy is an important element of the park's context within NPS politics, the local community and GLBT activism and, as a result, the approach I employed met the challenge of tracing the rhetorical strategies of the image as it circulated *at the time of the controversy*. Here, I am especially concerned with the relationship between vision and memory. My approach is in direct contrast to that of the iconoclasts and demonstrates an iconophilic orientation within memory sites. In line with the previous chapters, this case study examines what the visual and spatial strategies of the park suggest (or suggested) to work towards an understanding of how strategies may be altered and made pedagogically moving.

Looking Forward

I hope that as I continue to develop these insights, my analysis can be useful for feminist activists, educators, NPS park staff, and scholars of memory, museums and the history of social movements. My contribution to the field, on the whole, is an extended study of the varying strategies simultaneously at work in an underexamined site. I answer calls to further explore the materiality and spatial dimensions of rhetoric while also, hopefully, helping to triangulate the practices within memory sites and larger political landscapes. For feminists, I think it is important to keep our fingers on the pulse of memory as it lives and breathes. Feminists are often concerned not simply with the memory as a product of practices but also the means by which it was produced. Attention to these processes may offer insights into contemporary politics of emphasis, erasure and their effects. Feminist educators may also be interested in the practices at such sites in order to measure reception and the level of transformative involvement visitors experience.

Future work pertaining to the park itself can go in multiple directions including highlighting how these practices transform, which other practices are at work, and accounting for

how visitors explain their experiences. I believe the orientation of my criticism highlights how feminist concepts are or are not present in the park's strategies. In the future, perhaps arguments like this may help aid and facilitate reflective public discourse about the memory politics that swirl around the historic sites of social movements. This may be especially important as the NPS broadens its holdings to include more materials concerning LGBTQ history; lessons from the WRNHP may be instructive. The eighth pillar and back wall of the Visitor Center's second floor continue to hail visitors. How significant sites, like the park, frame, authenticate and at times closet material influences social movements for, as we know, pasts follow and shape us.

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Alia Bellwood

Curriculum Vitae

Education

Syracuse University

M.A., Speech and Communication, Projected Graduation 2014

Thesis Advisor: Charles E. Morris III

Thesis: Sights and Spaces of Moving Memories: The Public Memory Work of the Women's Rights National Historical Park

GPA 4.0

St. John's University

B.A., Rhetoric, Communication and Theatre Spring 2010

Department Golden Key award for exceptional research

Jack Franzetti Honors Program Award

GPA 3.76, Magna Cum Laude

Professional Appointments and Teaching Experience

Teaching Evaluations Available Upon Request

Oral Communication for Engineers, Communication and Rhetorical Studies, Syracuse University, Spring 2014

Graduate Instructor

The graduate course is a required for doctorate students in engineering. Students practice analyzing audiences, preparing speech material and delivering appropriate and compelling speeches. I teach as a stand-alone instructor responsible for course design, deployment and assessment. The core 5 speech assignments: Impromptu, Informative, Persuasive, Academic Conference Presentation and Ceremonial.

Presentational Speaking, Communication and Rhetorical Studies, Syracuse University, Fall 2012-Spring 2014 (7 sections over 4 semester)

Graduate Instructor

I taught undergraduate students how to assess audiences, develop original material and deliver professional and compelling speeches. The department's course structure includes 5 speeches: Introductory, Informative, Persuasive, Epideictic, Impromptu. As a stand-alone instructor, I develop lectures, supplementary assignments, student assessment and a syllabus.

University of Rochester Debate Union, English Department, University of Rochester Fall 2010-Spring 2012 (4 semesters)

Assistant Debate Coach/Visiting Instructor

My specialty is in British Parliamentary/WUDC debate. I designed and presented weekly lectures on argumentation and public speaking in preparation for competitive debates. I worked with fellow coaches and facilitated debate practices, one-on-one training for specific skills, and judged at dozens of collegiate debate tournaments.

St. John's University Debate Society, Fall 2007-Spring 2010 (6 semesters)

Society Officer

I assisted the head coach in the training new debaters and provided detailed feedback after practice debates. I organized public debates for community engagement and education and judged at a regional tournament.

Research Presentations & Workshops

2014 Rhetoric Society of America

Panel: Memories of War and Peace

Paper: "Ship Space, Cemetery Place: The Memory Work on the USS Intrepid"

2014 RSA Research Network: Sharing Work in Progress

Senior Scholar: Professor Lisa Flores (University of Colorado, Boulder)

Paper: "Where Does the 'Black Lesbian Feminist' Belong? Contested Social Movement Memory at the Women's Rights National Historical Park"

2014 RSA Moderator for "In Conversation Panel: Rhetoric & Activism"

Scholars: Professors Dana Cloud & Seth Kahn

2014 Rhetoric Society of America at Syracuse (RSA@SU) Spring Graduate Forum

Paper: "Ship Space, Cemetery Place: The Memory Work on the USS Intrepid"

2014 Camp Rhetoric at Pennsylvania State "Works-in-Progress"

Respondent: Professor Debra Hawhee

Paper: "Ship Space, Cemetery Place: The Memory Work on the USS Intrepid"

2013 National Communication Association in Public Address Division

Panel: Urban Space and Public Oratory

Respondent: Professor Tom Dunn

Paper: "Hillary Clinton at the Bus Stop: Seneca Falls and Urban Preservation Politics"

2010 Eastern Communication Association Poster Presentation

Undergraduate Poster Session submission: "Gloria Anzaldúa's Letter to Third World Women: Rhetorical Inclusion and Exclusion"

Collegiate Activities and Awards

Future Professoriate Program Certificate – Specific training in academic teaching, research and professional excellence awarded through Syracuse University Teaching Assistant Program, May 2014 (Projected)

Nominated for Syracuse University TA Program "Outstanding Teaching Award" by Professors Cynthia Gordon, Charles E. Morris III and Lynn Greenky, Spring 2013

Research Travel Award to attend RSA Conference of \$600 from Communication and Rhetorical Studies Department, Syracuse University, Spring 2014

Creative Opportunities Grant from College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University – A monetary award to conduct thesis research supplemented, in part, by the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies to total \$1,050, Fall 2013

NCA Caucus Student Travel Grant Recipient of \$250, Fall 2013

St. John's Debate Society, 2007 – 2010

Selected Awards:

- 2010 Ithaca College Semi Finalist and 3rd Best Speaker
- 2009 Worlds Championship (Anatolia, Turkey) Debater
- 2009 Western Connecticut Semi Finalist and 3rd Best Speaker
- 2009 US Nationals Quarter Finalist
- 2009 NE Regional's Semi Finalist and 10th Best Speaker
- 2009 University of Massachusetts Finalist and Top Speaker
- 2008 Worlds Championship (Cork, Ireland) Debater

St. John's University Honors Program, 2006-2010

- 2009 Honors Program Keynote Student Speaker for Incoming Freshman Banquet
- 2008 & 2009 Honors Program Representative for Prospective Students

Professional Affiliations

Rhetoric Society of America Member, 2014

National Communication Association Member, 2013

- La Raza Caucus
- Women's Caucus

Rhetoric Society of America Communication Coordinator (RSA@SU), Syracuse University chapter, 2013-2014

Lampda Pi Eta Member, 2010

University Service

Judge, White-Denison Presentational Speech Competition Preliminary, Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies, Syracuse University, 2013-2014

Assistant Coach and Facilitator, University of Rochester Public Debates, Spring 2012

Judge, University of Rochester Medical School Graduate Student Debate, Fall 2010 and 2011

Trainer, Planner and Debater, St. John's Debate Society Public Debate Series in collaboration with the Honors Program, St. John's University, Spring 2010

Instructor, Leaders for Democracy Fellowship, Syracuse University, 2014

- Selected by Dr. Kendall Phillips

- 5 week program
- Assist in teaching basic public speaking skills, argumentation, debate and intercultural communication to 23-25 civic leaders from around the world

